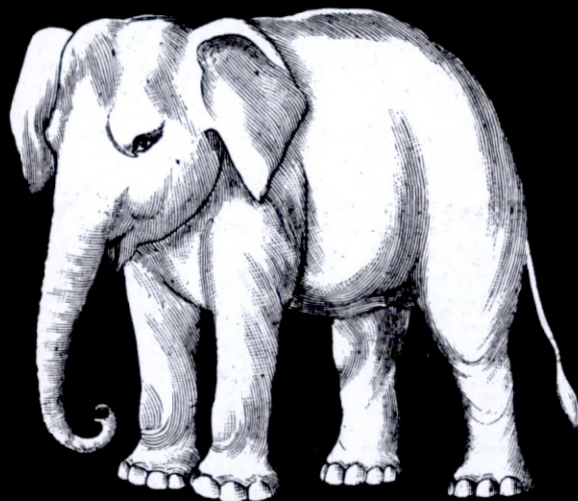


# BANDWAGON

JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TOO WHITE FOR BARNUM



FOREPAUGHS REPLY TO BARNUM

FOREPAUGH'S  
SACRED WHITE ELEPHANT

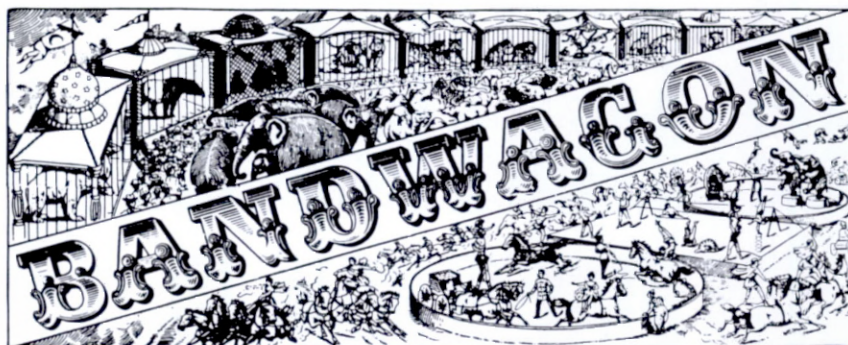
"LIGHT OF ASIA"  
PROVED BY THE HIGHEST SCIENTIFIC AUTHORITY TO BE

+ + + + GENUINE + + + +  
AND BARNUMS "SACRED WHITE?" ELEPHANT  
AND ALL ITS SURROUNDINGS A RANK FRAUD.

Press of The Courier Company, Buffalo, N. Y.

JULY-AUGUST 1984





## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 28, No. 4

JULY-AUGUST 1984

Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Editor

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor and Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

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### This Month's Cover

This month's cover continues our tribute to the 1884 circus season. In the May-June issue a courier featuring Barnum's white elephant graced the cover. This month, we give Adam Forepaugh's pachyderm equal billing.

This advertising booklet was printed by the Courier Company of Buffalo for the Forepaugh date in Chicago from June 16 to 26, 1884. Most of its sixteen pages present evidence by scientific and journalistic authorities that the show's white elephant, the "Light of Asia," was genuine, and Barnum's a fake. It begins with the breathless line: "The White Elephant controversy has assumed almost national importance." About half the pages discredit Barnum's bull, and the other half prove Forepaugh's authentic. As it turned out of course, Barnum's elephant was real, and Forepaugh's a fake. The controversy brought the term "White Elephant" into common usage, and solved any unemployment problems

among circus bill writers as the affair created reams of publicity for both circuses. Original in Pfening Archives.

### 1984 Season's Review

A review of the 1984 circus season will appear in the January-February issue. The author will again be Fred Pfening III who would appreciate any information, advertising materials, photographs or anything else which would be useful in documenting the year. All material will be returned if requested. Pfening's address is 2315 Haverford Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43220.

### Ed Jones Recovering

Secretary-Treasurer Ed Jones underwent triple by-pass surgery in late July after experiencing a mild heart attack. He is recuperating at home, and would be glad to hear from friends.

### NEW MEMBERS

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James H. Frederick 2255 Three Towers Rd. Chandlersville, Ohio 43727	2850
James A. Baldwin 2345 Linden Ave. Zanesville, Ohio 43701	2851
Thomas M. Johnson 719 Story Wood Dr. Houston, Texas 77024	2852
Brian R. Murdock Moose Horn Rd. Northfield, Conn. 06778	2853
R. W. Tormey 1209 Power House NW Yakima, Wash. 98908	2854
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Frederic G. Gill P.O. Box 155 Baulkham Hills, NSW, Australia	2857
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### REINSTATED

William R. Perkins 34 Cleveland Ave. Saugus, Mass. 01906	2308
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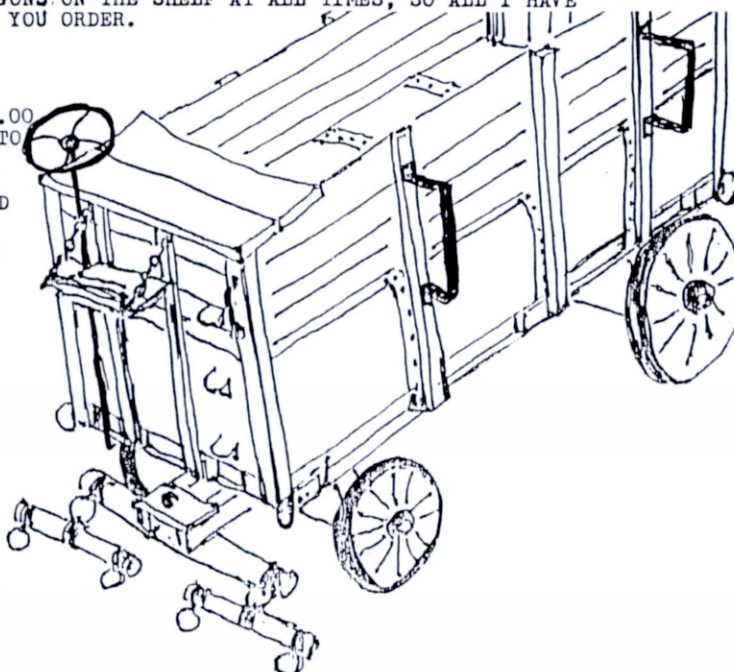
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# SO YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO OWN A CIRCUS

## THE GREAT FRED J. MACK CIRCUS IN 1955

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

It has been a fantasy of many circus fans to be the owner and operator of a circus. Many have questioned the manner in which shows are managed, and thought to themselves that they could do a better job. The writer acted out his dream. I organized a circus in 1955.

The story starts many years before when as a high school student I became acquainted with a physical education teacher, E. Don McCullough, who worked as a juggler and acrobat at fairs during the summer. It did not take long to establish our common interest in the circus. Together we produced a circus in the high school gym. It was much like a class play, but included students from all high school grades. My part was selling the advertising for the program of the "Barnyard & Baileyhay Circus," and to provide the closing thrill act by coming down a 20 foot ramp on roller skates. This latter feat seems a bit crazy now, but it came off without incident.

During the following summer, in 1941, both McCullough and I went on the road with the Barr Bros. Circus, a six truck trick with a trained bear and three or four horses. McCullough performed in the show and I sold prize candy and did odd jobs. The Barr show was owned by Bill Meyers and Buck Lucas. Meyers had been a phone promoter, and Lucas had owned a number of small shows in prior years using the Bernard Bros. title. Lucas did western acts such as roping and trick riding, and

had been with some of the corporation shows as well as with Bud Anderson. Meyers' wife Mildred was the advance agent.

After some fair dates as a midway attraction the show started one day stands around Ohio. I was promoted to the advance where my job was to drive Mrs. Meyers, and to post date sheets and cards. I also began placing the newspaper ads, designing them in the newspaper offices. Mildred slept in tourist homes, but I was relegated to the back seat of the car. She once told me that if I had been a relative of hers I too could have slept inside.

The Barr show was my first experience on the road and the next summer I was on the Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey train when it left Columbus. I was an usher on the big show. My friendship with McCullough continued through the years. In the early 1950s he produced a circus for the Eagles fraternal organization that played ten or so cities. He later produced the Grotto circus in Columbus for a couple of years.

Through my college period and early years of raising a family my interest in the circus went on the back burner. But by the early 1950s I was back at it, collecting and writing about the circus. In

**The circus is pictured at the Graceland shopping center, Columbus, Ohio, April 30, 1955. The R. A. Miller animal side show is on the right using two semi-trailers as a bannerline.**

the fall of 1954 McCullough came to me with the thought of organizing a circus to tour Ohio the following summer. I agreed. Another friend of McCullough's, Joe Flynn, was enlisted in the effort, the three of us were the prime movers of what was to become 'the Great Fred J. Mack Circus.

On January 14, 1955 we incorporated in the State of Ohio as Public Enterprises, Inc. I was elected president and Don McCullough was named vice-president. The original capital authorized was \$50,000, 250 shares at \$200 a share.

A stock prospectus for a corporation to organize and to operate a traveling circus was written on February 17, 1955. The prospectus indicated that transportation would be on four trucks. These were an office truck, a walk-in van for chairs, a larger walk-in for concessions, and a two ton tractor and semi-trailer to haul the canvas poles and seats. Other equipment listed included four gasoline light plants, beds, dining, and office equipment. The canvas, to cost around \$6,000, included a 70' by 190' big top and marquee. The rebuilding of the trucks was to be done at the Fred D. Pfening Company's manufacturing plant. The bookings were to be principally in Ohio, and to be sponsored by local auspices. The initial income was to come from the sale of season banners and direct sale of the show.

The original budget was for an ex-





penditure of \$30,000. It was outlined as follows:

1. Transportation, including purchase of trucks, remodeling, painting, license and insurance. \$6,000.
2. Light and power. \$2,500.
3. Seating. \$2,500.
4. Canvas. \$6,500.
5. Dining equipment. \$500.
6. Office equipment. \$200.
7. Sound equipment. \$600.
8. Pre-season advance. \$2,000.
9. Pre-season quarters. \$1,000.
10. Printed matter. \$1,000.
11. Initial supplies. \$1,000.
12. Beds and bedding. \$200.
13. Cash reserve. \$4,000.

At the time the prospectus was written cash on hand, from sale of stock, equipment and services available came to \$21,500. Cash and equipment yet to be raised was \$8,500.

The cost of operation was to be \$500 a day, or \$3,000 a week, and it was estimated that the income from the big show, side show, pony rides, local banners, season banners and concessions would be \$507.00 a day. Looking back on these estimates it seems rather naive to think that a show could last at such a break even projection.

As poor as the prospectus was it attracted additional investors from a variety of Columbus citizens. Frank S. Rittman, a certified public accountant, joined up and was elected treasurer. James Britt, an attorney received stock in exchange for legal services. Other directors included O. J. Smith, a wholesale distributor; Robert A. Daniels, owner of a Buick dealership; and Fred F. Jaeger, Jr., an insurance agency owner. Additional investors were Ray S. Reinert, a printing company owner; Dr. Robert W. Vesper, a veterinarian; Irwin M. Wilson, a retired truckline operator; Victor Meyers, owner of a potato chip firm; Dan P. Smith, a Northern Ohio merchant; Larry Scales, a printer; William Jaeger; Fred F. Jaeger, Sr.; Roger L. Sullivan and Vernon F. Sale. Other in-kind investors included: Raymond E. Mason, Jr., who provided a truck; Willis H. Haver, who provided folding chairs; Fred Young, who provided a stake driver; LaVerne Green and Miles Whitbeck, who provided sound equipment. The total amount of cash and in kind services or equipment came to \$25,600.

An ad was placed in the January 15, 1955 *Billboard* for a general agent for sponsored bookings; family acts; an animal trainer to handle elephants, horses, ponies, dogs and monkeys; and promotional men. Applicants were to respond to General Manager, Public Enterprises, Inc., Columbus, Ohio.

A large number of letters were received. The most interesting one was from Frederic A. "Babe" Boudinot, former agent and bill car manager for the Ringling-Barnum Circus. Lo and behold he was interested in talking to us about



Three of the show owners in front of the marquee on April 30. Left to right are Frank Rittman, treasurer; Chief Keys, boss can-

vasman; Fred D. Pfening, Jr., president and E. Don McCullough, vice-president and general manager.

handling the advance. Talk about going from the whale to the minnow.

Boudinot came to Columbus to discuss the prospects of joining the show. It did not take him long to see this was a amateur operation that he wanted no part of. My fondest memory of his visit was my taking him as a guest to the Rotary Club, where I introduced him as the former general agent of the Greatest Show on Earth.

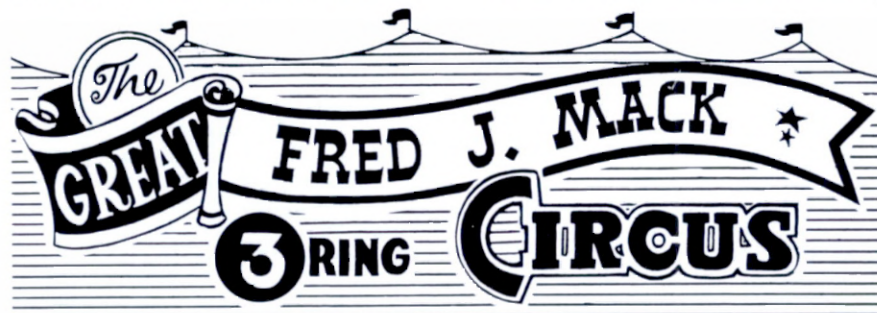
By early February the organization of the circus was attracting the attention of the local press. We announced that the title was to be the Great Don Mack Circus. The Don Mack name had been used as McCullough's stage name. Shortly after the title was made public we were slapped with a law suit by a local newspaper's outdoor writer who also had a television program on fishing

The Mack show letterhead was printed in bright red on yellow paper. All illustrations are from the author's collection.

and hunting, and whose name was also Don Mack. He sought a restraining order on the use of his name, stating that his column, "Outdoors with Don Mack," had been published intermittently in the *Ohio State Journal* since 1929, and that his by-line had appeared regularly for the past 25 years in *American Field Magazine*. Mack charged that Public Enterprises, Inc., adopted the name Great Don Mack Circus deliberately and knowingly with the intent to confuse, deceive and mislead the public to believe that he was the promoter of the circus. Mack's outdoor TV program was sponsored by a large savings and loan in Columbus, and they were really the ones behind the suit.

During the court hearing letterheads were introduced showing that Don McCullough had used the Don Mack name professionally for over ten years. But we lost. The title was not really that important in any case.

It was then that the final title was se-



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lected. Using parts of the names of the three original organizers we came up with Fred, from my name, J. for Joe Flynn and Mack from McCullough. This was the title that went in the history books as the show out of Columbus, Ohio in 1955.

We caught the interest of the *Wall Street Journal*. On March 15th an article appeared on the front page of that paper under the headline "Fifteen Businessmen in Ohio Ante \$30,000 To Start A Circus." The sub-head read, "They think their operation is foolproof, but don't rule out possibility of loss."

One paragraph was more of a prophecy than we had really known at the time. It read, "Even if the circus operates at a loss, Mr. Pfening and Mr. McCullough say they will have no regrets. All stockholders are well able to afford any resultant losses and are impressed with the fact that, although every contingency has been explored, weather or bad luck could still wreck the venture."

The February 15, 1955 issue of the *Billboard* told of the show's progress. It stated that a 70 ft. big top with two 30s had been ordered from U.S. Tent & Awning, of Chicago, Illinois, and that power plants and trucks were in quarters.

The original invoice, dated March 7, 1955, from U.S. Tent shows that a 70 foot round top with one 40 and two 30 foot middles, with 10 foot side wall in bags was actually received. Delivery was also taken on a 16 x 20 foot flame-proofed marquee with ten foot side wall and a lettered "T" curtain. The top was dark blue with an orange crown, with blue and orange striped side wall. The big top and side wall cost \$4183.67 and the marquee was \$361.30. An advance payment with order was made in the amount of \$1136.20, and the balance was paid after receipt. The poles, stakes and rigging cost an additional \$1427.61.

One truck was actually purchased in December of 1954. In January a large moving van type straight truck that had been used as a traveling X-Ray unit was purchased from the State of Ohio for \$250. This truck became the office-ticket wagon. A double-deck auto hauler semi and tractor was purchased for \$600 in January. It was cut down and used as the pole wagon. The remodeling of this truck was done in the Pfening Company's factory. A 1941 Cadillac hearse was purchased for \$300, and remodeled as a sound car and record playing facility for big show music. Two used 22 foot Fruehauf semi-trailers were purchased at \$400 each. One became a working men's sleeper and the other the light plant truck. A powered stake driver mounted on a two wheeled trailer was bought for \$550. Five light plants cost \$1200. We acquired six hundred folding chairs for \$800 and eight sections of six high bleachers cost \$600.



The canvas semi was equipped with an overhead rail, and was painted yellow with red lettering.

A grandstand for the chairs cost \$988.

By early April all of the acts had been contracted. The Orlo Sparton Family was booked at \$250 a week; George Barton with horses and ponies at \$150; Doc Ford and wife, dogs and ponies at \$125; Walter Harter with animal acts at \$100; Mickey King aerial act at \$150; Happy Spitzer, clown mule act at \$125; R. A. Miller with Jessie the elephant at \$200; Al Ross and wife, clowns, at \$150 and Georgie Lake, clown at \$30.

George Hubler joined as show treasurer. Chief Clarence Keys signed up as boss canvasman at \$60 a week. His wife Tillie was cookhouse steward for \$60 a week. With the Keys coming to the show it began to look like a reunion of former circus owners. Harter, Sparton, Ford, Barton, Miller, Keys, and Hubler had all operated their own circuses in prior years.

Frank D. Bland was hired as the general agent at \$250 a week. Tom Huftle came on as a banner salesman on commission of 35%. Duke Hall went ahead on phone promotions. Huftle made a number of large bulk ticket sales to a couple of Columbus supermarket chains which provided additional cash prior to the opening.

I designed a four page newspaper herald and arrangements were made to have old showman R. M. Harvey's Chief Printing Company of Perry, Iowa, print and mail 1,000 a day at a cost of \$10 per thousand, plus 1½ cents postage each. The herald contained two quarter page ads. One was for Ford farm tractors and the other for Coca Cola. I sold the Ford ad for \$1,000 for the season. The Coke ad was in exchange for four concession tents, a quantity of concession salesmen's white Coke coats and a quantity of curtains to go in front of the reserved seats. The deal with Coca Cola was made with the help of Hal Eifert, manager of the Gooding Amusement Co., a Columbus based carnival, who was a good friend of Wayne McConnell, outdoor show sales manager for the Coca

Cola Bottling Company of Atlanta, Georgia.

I made a deal with the Hanna Paint Company of Columbus to furnish all of the paint in exchange for a notice on each truck stating, "This show uses only Hanna Paint." The Pfening Company was a good customer of Hanna, and the fifty or so gallons of paint was not a big item for them.

A variety of window card designs were ordered from the Enquirer Printing Co., in Cincinnati, Ohio. A special half sheet pictorial poster was designed by and purchased from the Triangle Printing Co. of Pittsburgh. I also put together a couple of newspaper ads.

By the end of March the show was taking shape, but the money was going fast. A board of directors meeting was held on March 22 where McCullough reported on the signing of acts and staff and outlined the financial position. A motion was made instructing the president and legal counsel to explore the possibility of negotiating a \$5,000 bank loan from the Huntington National Bank. These funds to be made available in an emergency. The board authorized the general manager to issue checks with his signature only up to \$500. Checks above that amount were to be signed by an additional director.

A deal was made with the Casto shopping centers in Columbus for the show to open in four of their centers in various parts of the city. The first six days of the season were in the Casto shopping centers.

Tom Huftle sold advance tickets to a couple of supermarket chains and this brought in around \$3,500 in advance of the opening. Even after this thirty five percent commission, this brought badly needed cash to the show prior to the opening.

By this time tension was building between the general manager and the president concerning the expenditure of money in framing the show. The original budget called for \$30,000 to be spent, actually \$26,000, as \$4,000 was to have been held as an operating reserve. Before the show opened nearly \$40,000 had been spent. Of this





\$5506.63 was due to suppliers as accounts payable.

The direct cost of equipment broke down as follows: trucks and trailers, \$4306.69; canvas, poles and rigging, \$5952.58; light plants, \$2941.45; chairs and bleachers, \$2537.80; cookhouse, \$393.68; and office, \$182.50.

A number of expenses turned out to be higher than planned, such as liability insurance at \$1,853, and motor vehicle registration fees at \$1,528.85. The general manager requested and received a life insurance policy that cost \$645. A payment to the state of Ohio for workmen's compensation cost \$348.52. A deposit to the state of Ohio for unemployment was \$392.83.

In any event, by April 17, 1955 when it was time to move out of quarters the show was ready; and, if I do say so myself, it looked great. Orlo Sparton had lettered most of the trucks, some with pictorial designs.

A few weeks before the April 18 opening the emotional strain got to me and I developed an ailment requiring Preparation H. This discomfort progressed to the point that I sought the advice of a surgeon, who at once scheduled me for a hospital visit. But fortuitously for me, when the show left town my health problem went with it, just in time to cancel the surgery.

When the Great Fred J. Mack Circus left the winterquarters it was moving on the following trucks:

Pole wagon semi, carrying stakes, rigging and a Ford farm tractor.

Big top canvas semi, with overhead loading rail. Also carried bleachers.

Light plant semi, with sleeping bunks in front.

Sleeper semi.

Straight truck office ticket wagon.

Walk in straight van loaded with folding chairs.

Straight truck cookhouse.

Straight truck pulling two wheeled power stake driver.

Cadillac sound car.

The new orange and blue big top was erected on the Northern Lights Shopping Center on April 17 the day before the official opening. R. A. Miller, who owned the show's elephant, had two

The ticket-office truck was a former X-ray van. One of the concession tents from Coca-Cola is on the right.

trucks, one with a group of cages containing small animals. He also had a tent and marquee. This equipment was placed on the midway and served as a side show. The old X-Ray ticket truck was flashed up, and along with the Coke tents it created an attractive midway.

The premier performance, given on the afternoon of April 18, 1955, was a strong one. The program follows:

Display 1—Spec with 25 people and 12 head of stock.

2. Harder's, Sparton's and Ford's dog acts.

3. Al and Diane Ross clowns.

4. Swinging ladders.

5. Banner walk-a-round.

6. Harder's Riding Dogs, Ford's Goats, Barton's Riding Dogs.

7. Clowns.

8. Arjean Duo, perch (Spartons).

9. Al Ross, rolly bolly, Spitzer's Unicycle.

10. Clowns.

11. Miss Franceen (Sparton), neck loop.

12. Clowns.

13. Borgal Ford, cloud swing.

14. Barton's Liberty Horses.

Orlo Sparton lettered the show trucks in winter quarters. Additional illustrations on the trucks were done by a local newspaper cartoonist.



15. Spartonets, roman rings.
16. Al Ross, comedy bike.
17. Coloring book pitch.
18. Sparton Trio, low wire act.
19. Margarette Delise, rolling globe.
20. Manage horses.
21. Mickey King, one arm planges.
22. Happy Spitzer's comedy mule.
23. Jessie the elephant, doing one leg stand, presented by Frankie Lou Woods.

The clowns were Al and Diane Ross, Happy Spitzer and Georgie Lake.

The staff on opening day included: E. Don McCullough, general manager; George Hubler, treasurer and concession manager; William Smith, office manager; William Miller, 24 hour man; Chief Keys, superintendent; Orlo Sparton, program director; Doc Ford, announcer; Jack Odem, transportation master; Floyd Moser, property boss; Tillie Keys, steward; Pearlie Houser, seats and sailmaker, and Frank D. Bland, general agent.

The opening day was not impressive at the box office. Two hundred forty-two children's tickets were sold at thirty-five cents each. Two hundred ninety-seven adult tickets were sold at fifty cents each. Seventy reserve seats were sold at fifty cents each. A commission of \$7 was paid to the reserve ticket seller and the net ticket income was all of \$261.20. However there were far more than 539 people in the tent for both shows. Plenty of people showed up with tickets distributed by the grocery stores who had made the advance bulk purchases. Income from the show's share of concessions was \$37.70. Casual labor had been hired to set the show up and it cost \$207.25. The show had opened on a low note and went down hill from that point on.

We moved to the Town and Country shopping center the second day. Ticket income on April 19 was \$393.65. Concessions and side show brought in an additional \$94.08. Following the night show disaster struck when a light plant caught on fire, totally destroying all of the generators as well as the semi-trailer. The fire department stated it appeared to them that an electrical relay overheated around 11:30 p.m. causing the fire. The big top nearby was not damaged. An article in the Columbus paper the next day quoted the fire chief as saying he estimated the loss at \$5,000. He said Lee Cheminant, Alaska, a circus employee tending the large generators, had been overcome by carbon monoxide earlier in the evening of the fire. The emergency squad had revived him and he had gone back to work on the generators.

The afternoon show was lost the following day. Two new generators were purchased at a cost of \$1,225, and the night show was given on time on April 20 at the Central Point shopping center.

The rest of the week was not much



better. The net income for the first six days was \$3,360.56, and expenses, including the purchase of the new generators, was \$4,116.52. The printing expense for the week was \$125 and the general manager's salary was \$195. The net loss was \$1,299.96.

During all of my visits to the show R. A. Miller's side show seemed to be doing a big business. During the first week he benefitted from the people attending using the supermarket tickets, as well as those buying at the ticket wagon. The show was supposed to receive 25% of the side show gross, but in looking back at the income turned in it is clear that the circus was getting a short count.

During a recent discussion with George Hubler he advised that McCullough was intimidated by the burly, gruff Miller, and probably never questioned the count. Miller would hold the crowd until he had worked it completely, ignoring the scheduled starting time of the big show performance. On many days Miller's reported side show gross was about 35% of the total big show ticket gross. Who knows what Miller's actual gross may have been.

On Friday April 22 the board of directors of Public Enterprises held a special meeting at the Howard Johnson restaurant across the street from the shopping center where the show was playing. During the meeting the president brought up a number of points of concern. The minutes read as follows: "1. Suggested the firing of Mickey King, who has been uncooperative and who is costing us too much money. 2. A report was requested from the general manager to the why and wherefore of the fire. Why the gasoline tanks were installed so small that it was impossible to keep the motors running during the entire performance, requiring that gasoline be poured in the tank while the motor was actually running. 3. A report was requested from the general manager in regard to whether the sound truck brakes had been put in working order. 4. A report was requested from the general manager asking if all of the truck drivers had received chauffeurs licenses."

Other directors brought up other questions, such as: Why was the show not starting on time? Why were the generators which were purchased not checked adequately before the show opened? Why did a new generator that was purchased have a cracked block? Why had a farm tractor been purchased against the wishes of the boss canvasman? Why was a refrigerator bought when the cook only wanted an icebox?

Joe Flynn resigned as a member of the board, and as secretary. A discussion was held on the subject of the general manager's taking the profits of the Coca Cola concession in lieu of expenses on the road. It was pointed out that he was taking the profits of the prize candy concession, and might also

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Exercising the most intricate and puzzling tricks with a confidence and freedom some of the most learned students of today and fame in our almost unbelievable mental development.



The Big Bear supermarket chain bought a large number of tickets for their customers. The illustrations used in their newspaper ad were taken from the four page newspaper herald printed by the Chief Printing Co.

take the profit of the peanut sales. Even with the poor attendance in Columbus, it appeared that the general manager's profits on the Coca Cola concession were far in excess of any normal road expenses. It was therefore evident that a serious mistake had been made in allowing him to take the Coke profits. It was decided that a new arrangement would be made regarding the concessions profits. George Hubler was handling all of the concessions and it was decided that he be removed from salary and that he keep all profits after paying the show 20% commission on all concessions sales.

In a later meeting the same night the general manager agreed to most of the

suggestions of the board, but insisted that Mickey King was a great draw and that he would accept no instructions as to selection, retention, or dismissal of any of the show's acts.

Another meeting was held the following day, April 23, at the home of the general manager. Five directors and four additional stockholders were present. Frank Rittman, the treasurer, stated that the special meeting had been called because an examination of the corporation's check book late the previous evening had revealed that the corporation's cash resources were not sufficient to meet the following liabilities:

Payroll due April 24	2000
Bill from Jaeger Insurance	1100
Bill for workmen's comp.	500
	<b>\$3600</b>

In a discussion which followed Fred Jaeger said the show should at least be tried on the road in the small towns for which it was designed. He expressed, however, grave doubts that the operation would be successful. The general manager said that the corporation should borrow from the Huntington National Bank, and that there was a good chance that money would be made on the road. I said that the show should be continued, but if possible without borrowing from the bank. I advised that the Pfening Company was willing to wait for payment of the \$1995.61 due on the truck rebuilding. Rittman said that he felt the show should not be continued because any further funds contributed or borrowed, would, in his opinion, be lost as it was his judgment that the operation was beyond McCullough's managerial capacity. Orvil Smith said he felt the show should be continued, and he was willing to contribute additional materials from his store but could spare no cash. Joe Flynn said it should continue and that he was willing to contribute \$500, but would have to borrow it.

Victor Meyers said the show should continue, but the friction between the president and the general manager should first be eliminated. He was willing and able to contribute \$1000 in cash to meet immediate obligations. Vernon Scales wished to continue, and said that he was willing to wait on payment of his printing bills and to contribute additional printing of merchant tickets, but had no cash available. He recommended borrowing from the Huntington. Irwin Wilson (father-in-law of the general manager) expressed great confidence in McCullough, and that the show should positively be continued, and offered to pay in \$1000 cash immediately.

After the discussion Jaeger submitted his resignation as director, and it was unanimously accepted. Wilson was proposed as a director to replace Jaeger, and was elected. Rittman submitted his resignation as a director, and Meyers



was elected in his place. Rittman then resigned as treasurer and Meyers was elected to that office. Meyers and Wilson loaned the \$2000 to the corporation at once. I was then instructed to arrange to borrow up to \$5000 from the Huntington National Bank, giving the bank a first and prior lien on any and all of the corporation's assets.

The new board of directors extended a vote of confidence to McCullough.

On April 25, 1955 I went to the Huntington National Bank and arranged for a loan of \$3000 to Public Enterprises, Inc. covered by a chattel mortgage.

The description of the chattels listed the following:

One Big top, 70 ft. with two thirty ft. middles and one forty ft. middle, side wall, poles, stakes and all rigging, blue in color.

One "Main Entrance" marquee tent.

One tent 30 by 80 ft. brown with side wall and poles.

One tent 30 by 30 ft. "Coca Cola" with side walls.

Two tents 8 by 8 ft. "Coca Cola" with side walls.

One tent 8 by 12 ft. "Coca Cola" with side walls.

600 wooden chairs.

One grandstand to support chairs.

Twelve sections of bleacher seats.

One D.C. generator.

One A.C. generator.

Miscellaneous wire, electric cables and equipment.

Two automatic stake drivers.

Two public address systems.

All other miscellaneous equipment other than specified referred to above, used in the operation of the Great Fred J. Mack Circus.

The note had been guaranteed by Frank Rittman. A second chattel mortgage was executed at the same time for \$2290.83 by the Fred D. Pfening Co. The same equipment was listed as collateral. This mortgage covered the money due the Pfening Company for building the show prior to the opening.

The circus made a 122 mile jump to St. Clairsville, Ohio for the first road date on April 25th. The show then moved into Pennsylvania for ten days in that state. During the second week the gross ticket and concession income was \$6529.90. Of this \$1060.03 was paid to sponsors, leaving a net income of \$5469.87. Total expenses for the week were \$4105.00, making the gross profit \$1364.87. A 4.5% insurance charge took off another \$178.78 leaving a net profit for the week of \$1186.09. The average daily nut was \$684. Things were beginning to look better.

But by the third week the daily nut had gone to \$704, and the loss for the week was \$82.52. It was time for another meeting of the board of directors.

The general manager was on hand to give a first hand report at the May 8 meeting. He advised that after paying all employees on April 24, using the



**Happy Spitzer and his comedy mule. He is sitting on the grandstand.**

\$2600 borrowed from shareholders, all other operating expenses had been paid from current show income, except for \$262.80 for banners and \$349.91 for the general manager's salary, which were paid from the Columbus bank account. He requested that he be allowed to hold \$1000 on the show for cash and emergency payments.

James Britt outlined the expenditures made in preparing the show for the road, indicating that the original budget called for only \$26,000 capital investment and \$4000 to be held in reserve. However, a total of \$40,070.06 was spent, 53% over budget, leaving a deficit of \$10,506.63.

The president was directed to pay off the deficit as rapidly as possible, using income from the show, except for a balance of \$1000 to be kept in the bank account for emergency use.

Britt also suggested that expenses on the show be cut in order that the debts be paid off faster. The general manager was asked how he could best cut the ex-

**Al Ross was the featured clown, presenting a rolo-bolly and juggling act.**



penses, and he stated that the quickest method would be to accept the two weeks notice given by the Sparton Family. There was some discussion about dropping additional acts, but McCullough said that since the Spartons' salary was \$250 a week, the \$1000 a month savings should accomplish the cutting for the time being.

The general manager wrote to the president on May 15 while the show was in Belpri, Ohio. In this letter he said: "The Sparton Family has been removed from the payroll. Their salary together with meals for five people, and gas and oil for two trucks and a car, will bring a savings of about \$290 a week. Charles Houser and Jack Odem have both left reducing the payroll by \$125. I have released two canvassmen for a reduction of \$40. Total payroll expenses deducted thus are \$455 a week.

"Frankie Lou Woods has signed to do neck loop, ladder, flying perch and single traps at one hundred per week. Floyd Moser is now assistant boss canvassman and boss props at a raise of thirty dollars. I have increased the salary of two men by a total of fifteen dollars. This makes new payroll increases of one hundred forty five dollars.

"The total reduction in effect through personnel changes amounts to more than three hundred dollars a week.

"I am sending you about nine hundred dollars worth of checks payable to the circus. I am holding \$350 in cash for the petty cash fund and ticket change money. I would like for you to bring to Logan five hundred dollars in travelers checks to be kept on the show for emergency use. I hope to build up the additional one hundred fifty dollars from this week's receipts.

"Net profit on the show this past week is about five hundred, which is not bad considering we had three days of rain, plus a two day stand at Marietta.

"We are playing Belpri on short notice because Ohio University officials refused permission for the Inter-Fraternity Council to sponsor the show. This information was received Thursday. Local costs and taxes made it impractical to attempt to cold date in Athens.

"I have also assigned a man to assist Larry Wilson in posting and carding until the advance gets well ahead. We are now using panels and date and pictorial cards."

The Spartons had left on May 14. The Harders left on May 31. Mickey King left on June 12. Happy Spitzer left on June 26. All of the other acts remained until the show closed. Chief and Tillie Keys left on June 16 following a blowup with the general manager.

The fourth week the show lost \$536.34. The next week the loss was \$1581.69. The show worked its way back to play two days in Columbus on June 10 and 11th. It grossed \$941.32 on these two days, but had expenses of \$509.41. The editor of a Columbus





**The pole semi-trailer was a former auto carrier. It was painted white with red lettering.**

newspaper lived across the street from the park where this date was played, and the day after the show had left town a large photograph appeared in his paper showing the elephant remains piled up and left uncleared across from his front yard. The loss for the week of the return Columbus stand was \$492.84. Even though the show was keeping ahead cash wise on the road, printing bills for paper, cards and heralds were being paid out of the Columbus checking account. These additional expenses contributed to the total losses each week.

From Columbus the show moved East, again playing New Lexington on June 13 and Zanesville on the 14th. The week ending on June 18 showed a loss on the show of \$132.06, plus \$925 paid from Columbus on debts going back to before the opening. I was getting plenty of heat from various suppliers to come up with payment of long past due bills. The total loss for that week was \$1057.06.

Frank Bland, the general agent, had been falling back in booking dates and pressure was on him to get busy. Rather than get busy contracting additional stands he quit on June 21st.

On June 30 I received a letter from the Huntington National Bank. It read, "Information has come to our attention which causes us to request payment of the note of Public Enterprises, Inc., dated April 25, 1955.

"A copy of this letter is being forwarded to Mr. Frank S. Rittman, who was the individual guarantor of the obligation.

"May we hear from you immediately with respect to the settlement of this obligation."

On June 30 Rittman responded to the request. He wrote, "Mr. Pfening informs me that the corporation is unable to make immediate payment of this note.

"As guarantor of the obligation I enclose my personal check in the amount of \$3000 in full payment of the note. I expect of course to succeed to all of the bank's right, title and interest in rolling stock, tents, and other chattels which were mortgaged as security for the note."

The week ending on July 3 showed a loss of \$1053.03 on the show plus bills paid from Columbus in the amount of \$750.47, making a total loss of \$1803.50.

The show played Hubbard, Ohio on July 4 and moved to Windham, Ohio on the 5th. Only one show was given in Windham at night and the ticket sales amounted to \$244.10. Income from concessions that one show was \$70.23. At 25% this indicates that the concession and side show income was nearly as much as the ticket sales. This is very strange and suggests that either the records were not accurate or some money went elsewhere.

No dates had been booked after July 5

**The chair wagon was painted yellow with red lettering. The Sparton truck is on the right.**



so there was no choice but to bring the show back to Columbus, and close it for good or to do some booking and then reopen. When the show arrived in Columbus there was a total of \$448.50 in the ticket wagon safe. The acts and all other employees had been paid.

The board of directors of Public Enterprises, Inc. was called to a special meeting on July 7, 1955 where they were briefed on the show's current financial condition. They were also officially notified that Rittman had paid the note off at the Huntington, and in turn was holding a mortgage on all of the circus equipment.

The board was advised that the accounts payable amounted to \$4796.49. This included the \$2280.83 due the Pfening Company, which was covered by the second mortgage. The Great Fred J. Mack Circus was indeed broke. There was no interest expressed in continuing the operation, and official action was taken to not reactivate the show.

Most of the directors resigned, wanting to wash their hands of their whole circus investment. It was clear that they had lost the full amount of their capital investment. It was also very clear to Wilson and Meyers that the \$2000 they had loaned the show in April would not be repaid. At this time the directors were unaware of further liability in money due the Internal Revenue Service for the "trust funds" admission and payroll withholding taxes.

On July 8, 1955 McCullough sent me, as president of the corporation, a letter of resignation as general manager of the circus and as vice president of the corporation. He also advised that all of the equipment had been brought together per my instructions. He also offered to aid in the sale of the equipment and to assist in the termination of any circus business.

So Frank Rittman and I found ourselves with a fully equipped circus on our hands. The loaded trucks were moved to some vacant land near the Pfening Company factory. Georgie Lake and Floyd Moser had no place to go following the closing of the show. Georgie had broken his leg and was receiving workmen's compensation payments each week. I arranged for them to live in the office truck in exchange for acting as watchmen over the equipment.

Rittman, as owner of the equipment advertised in a late July issue of the *Billboard*. The ad read: "COMPLETE 10 TRUCK CIRCUS FOR SALE, including 70 ft. top with two 30's one 40. Five hundred folding chairs, grandstand and 12 sections of six-high bleachers. Two complete sound systems, two light plants with all cable. A 30 x 60 ft. top, stake driver, pole semi, lumber semi, sleeper semi and office truck. All equipment used only 12 weeks. Must move fast, low prices."

There was not much response to the ad, however a few weeks later the



chairs, bibles and blues were sold. I can't find the details of this transaction and cannot remember who purchased the seats. However I do remember seeing some Fred J. Mack chairs on a show a few years later, and to this day the Pfening Company uses about a dozen of them. Financial records list a payment of \$1825 and this amount would have been the sale of the seating equipment. Rittman applied this to the \$3000 due him.

The inventory of equipment for sale included the following:

One-Big Top, orange and blue, 70 ft. with two 30s and one 40, 10 ft. side wall. Complete with iron stakes, poles, rigging and stake puller.

One-Marquee, 20 x 30 ft. Blue and orange.

One-30 x 60 square end top.

One-Two wheel heavy duty stake driver, made by Lewis.

Three-Coca Cola blue concession tents.

One-20 x 30 ft. blue dining top with side wall.

One-16 KVA D.C. light plant on four wheel trailer.

One-6 KVA light plant.

One-1 KVA light plant.

One-Lot of electric cables, pigtails, twist locks etc.

One-Cookhouse complete with stove, bottle gas tanks, ice box, eating equipment to feed 100 people. Mounted on Chevrolet straight truck.

One-Beautiful 28 ft. Dodge straight truck, two room office and ticket selling area.

One-GMC 12 ft. walk in van, had been used as chair truck.

One-GMC 12 ft. closed van with doors on sides and rear.

One-GMC tractor with 20 ft. open top semi, used for canvas and lumber.

One-Fruehauf 22 ft. semi-trailer. Equipped with 18 bunks with springs. No tractor for this trailer.

One-30 ft. pole semi-trailer, made to load from the side, low bed allowing canvas to be rolled in from back. No tractor.

Two-Complete sound systems, large horn type speakers, studio type turn tables for big show music. One unit 6 volt the other 110 volt.

We had no takers on any of this equipment. Georgie Lake and Floyd Moser had gone south in the fall and I had to find some safe place to store the show.

Jack Lampton, a retired circus musician, owned a large trailer park in Columbus. I arranged in September to move all of the trucks to a field he owned next to his park.

Rittman volunteered endless hours completing financial reports and filling out the necessary tax forms. A request was made to recover an unused balance from the deposit for Ohio Workmen's Compensation.

After completing all of the financial records a total loss for entire operation

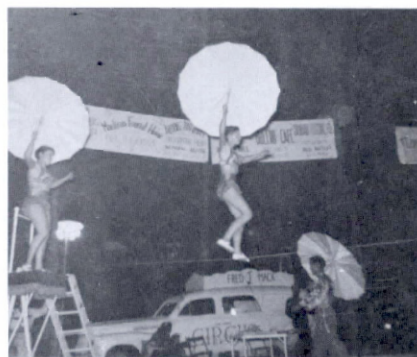
was \$21,739.87. The trial balance of the general ledger dated October 21, 1955 read as follows:

INCOME		
Ticket sales (gross)		29,555.00
Less Admissions		
Tax	662.78	
Concession income		3,920.91
Advertising (banners, group ticket sales)		8,593.23
EXPENSES		
General manager salary	2,916.99	
General manager expenses	1,187.46	
F.I.C.A. tax (employer)	465.80	
Unemployment tax	392.83	
Motor vehicle fees	1,528.85	
Highway use tax	25.00	
Other taxes	41.15	
Liability insurance	1,853.00	
Workmen's compensation	348.52	
Life insurance		
general manager	645.00	
Interest on loan	37.92	
Advertising (newspapers, posters and heralds)	3,627.04	
Tickets	860.95	
Telephone & telegraph	419.39	
Postage	11.43	
Stationery	122.05	
Fees	240.40	
Misc. general expenses	173.32	
Circus operating expenses	22,255.48	
Performers payroll	9,773.80	
Agents payroll	4,209.52	
Other wages	9,177.51	
Auspices settlements	2,832.82	
	63,809.01	42,069.14
Loss from operation		21,739.87

From time to time someone would show interest in buying the equipment, but we had no luck in getting any cash on the barrelhead. At the end of October Jack Lampton advised me that he thought he had a serious buyer. That buyer turned out to be Arthur "Hardtimes" Leonard, a man well known to circus fans as the longtime electrician on Mills Bros. Circus.

Leonard came to Columbus and looked over the equipment. I am not sure of the amount we asked for the whole show; however, we took what Leonard offered which was all of \$3,800. Of this \$400 was paid as a sales commission to Jack Lampton. What a bargain for Leonard.

Rittman was anxious to be relieved of the responsibility of the equipment.



The Sparton Family low wire act, in the background is the white sound car.

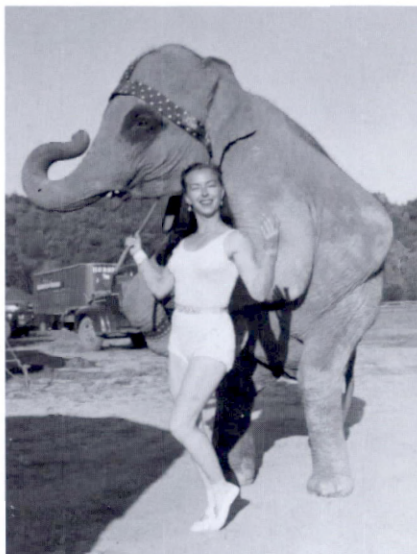
Winter was coming and the trucks were not under cover. Since Rittman had received about two thirds of his \$3,000 from the sale of the seats he quickly accepted the \$3,800 from "Hardtimes."

From the \$3,800, \$2280.83 was paid to the Fred D. Pfening Co. to satisfy the second mortgage, \$400 to Lampton and \$800 to Frank Rittman. The balance of \$319.17 was deposited in the bank to pay other debts.

A memorandum of sale dated November 2, 1955 read as follows, "On this date, Public Enterprises, Inc., represented by Fred D. Pfening, Jr. and Frank S. Rittman, sold to Arthur Leonard for a cash payment of \$3800, which represents the full and entire consideration for the transfer of all of the remaining equipment of the Fred J. Mack Circus, including particularly the following items:

1. Seven pieces of rolling stock.
2. Big top, middles and side wall, all poles, stakes and rigging.
3. One two wheeled motorized stake driver.
4. One complete sound system.
5. One 16 x 20 marquee.

Frankie Lou Woods and Jesse the elephant owned by R. A. Miller.





6. Various other show equipment."

Leonard later moved the equipment to the London, Ohio fairgrounds, where he framed his Leonard Bros. Circus for a 1956 tour.

So all of the equipment was gone. But there were other details in closing the corporation that had not been completed. Rittman had filed all of the state and federal tax forms. A number of creditors continued to dun us for payment of bills going back to April. The total amount of the bills was \$2515.66. The creditors included: The Bow and Arrow (owned by investor O. J. Smith), \$541.76; Empire Press (owned by investor Larry Scales), \$436.27; Enquirer Printing Co., Cincinnati, Ohio, \$90.40; General Tire Sales, \$517.38; Saunders Wrecker Service, \$264.70 and the Triangle Poster Co., Pittsburgh, Pa., \$171.46.

On December 27, 1955 I sent the following letter to the remaining creditors, "This letter will serve to advise you that Public Enterprises, Inc., an Ohio corporation, is insolvent.

"Hopeless insolvency is due to creditors' claims being far in excess of the assets. There are at this time no corporation assets. The stock in Public Enterprises, Inc. is worthless.

"The equipment formally owned by the corporation was foreclosed by mortgage holders and sold to satisfy the amounts due. The remaining funds were applied to taxes due the government."

There was yet one more detail which came as somewhat of a surprise. On January 25, 1956 I received a letter from the Internal Revenue Service. The letter was addressed to me personally, not to the corporation. Listed at the top of the letter was a total of \$1529.83 in withholding and admission taxes.

The letter read: "I have been advised that efforts to collect from Public Enterprises, Inc. that portion of above described assessment which was required by law to be withheld from remuneration paid to employees, have been unsuccessful.

"After careful consideration of all available facts and circumstances, it has been proposed that the penalty prescribed by Section 6671(a), Internal Revenue Code, be assessed against you as a responsible officer of the corporation. The penalties, as shown on the attached form of agreement, are equal to the amount of taxes required to be withheld but not paid over. The law provides that such penalties are to be assessed and collected in the same manner as taxes are assessed and collected.

"If no reply is received within 10 days, the penalties will be assessed and you will receive notice and demand payment of the tax, together with interest, at an early date."

As an officer of the corporation I was liable for a portion of this amount due the government. In addition three other officers were also liable. I paid \$509.94

The Triangle Poster Co. designed and printed this half sheet panel date.

and Frank Rittman paid \$250. The rest was paid by the other two officers, James Britt and Joe Flynn.

My original stock investment was \$3000, making my total personal loss \$3509.94. Victor Meyers had invested \$3000 and loaned an additional \$1000. Frank Rittman had invested \$4000 and paid \$250 on the taxes, making his total loss the largest. From my loss of \$3509.94 I learned an important lesson: never be an officer or a director of any business in which you invest.

There was another loss for me and that was the friendship of Don McCullough. I have had no contact with him since the close of the circus, and I feel badly about that.

After researching the financial records and all other remaining documents of the Great Fred J. Mack Circus a basic



Arthur "Hardtimes" Leonard stands beside the Mack ticket truck after it had been moved to his quarters in London, Ohio.

question comes to mind, one that I am sure is in the mind of the reader: why did the show fail?

The main reason was the lack of a good experienced advance. Sixty to ninety days should have been solidly booked before the show left quarters. The biller should have been staying two weeks ahead of the show. Also, an operating reserve should have been available to carry the show for the first month at least.

All of these factors reflect a total lack of experienced management. Where was I during the life of the show? I was running the bakery machinery company in Columbus. There is no way any business, especially a circus, can be run by remote control. But here again I had no experience in running a circus. At least Don McCullough had promoted a number of indoor circuses. But his limited circus experience appears not to have been enough to make the Mack show a success.

But I was indeed the actual owner of a touring circus, for what that is worth.

In the fall of 1955 McCullough went to work in the physical education department of the Kansas State Teacher's College in Emporia, Kansas. Emporia interestingly enough had been the winter quarters of the Parker and Watts Circus in 1938. Having received a PhD in physical education from the Ohio State University prior to the circus he went on to become the head of the physical education department at the University of South Dakota.

My effort in writing about the Great Fred J. Mack Circus brought much emotional anxiety. Digging into this after almost thirty years brought back forgotten memories, some not too happy. The writing of this article has been a strange experience, and at times I found it difficult to write about some of the events, especially about my differences with Don McCullough. He and I were the prime movers on the whole project. I wish for many reasons it could have been successful.



# The First Mugivan and Bowers Circus Great Van Amburg and Howes Great London Shows

By Gordon M. Carver

## PART TWO Season of 1910

Information on the 1910 season of Howes Great London is scarce. The tour was only a little over six months in length; in past years it had been eight or nine months long.

The start of the season came in Jacksonville, Florida with an unusual week long stand from March 28 to April 2 under the auspices of the local Shriners. After only one other stop in Florida, at Fernandina, it moved into Georgia where it spent the next two weeks. Some towns included Brunswick, Vidalia, Statesboro, and Augusta. It then moved quickly through nine towns in South Carolina, the principal ones being Columbia, Greenville, Spartansburg, Rock Hill and Chester. On April 29 they arrived in North Carolina at Charlotte and followed with Salisbury (later the winter home for Sparks Circus), High Point, Winston-Salem, and Asheville. Then came a short stay in Tennessee. The main stops here were Morristown, Johnson City and Bristol. The rest of May was spent in the Virginias at Bluefield, Roanoke and Lexington. So far as we know the show moved on 16 cars, one ahead and 15 back, five stocks, six flats and four sleepers making the show a bit larger than previous years.

June found the show still in Virginia at Staunton on the first and later Front Royal and Winchester. Hagerstown was the only Maryland city visited during the season. Pennsylvania started at Chambersburg on June 11 followed by Carlisle, Pottsville, Hazelton, Mauch Chunk and Carbondale with the show then entering New York at Oneonta on the 30th. This was followed by a quick run through upper New York state at Saratoga Springs on the 4th of July and then Glens Falls, Plattsburgh, and Rouses Point. On Monday, July 11, the show played its first Canadian stand at Montreal. It is surprising that the stay was for only one day as Montreal was a large city and most shows, even the largest, usually made it a two day stop. Perhaps heat from the grift made a stay of more than one day in any town difficult for this show. From there the show started a Canadian tour, its first in the Provinces that lasted through September 17.

Before we go too far let's go back to



This letterhead was first used in 1909 and was again used during the 1910 season. Designed and printed by the Donald-

son Lithograph Company of Newport, Kentucky, the title is in red outlined in black. Pfening Archives.

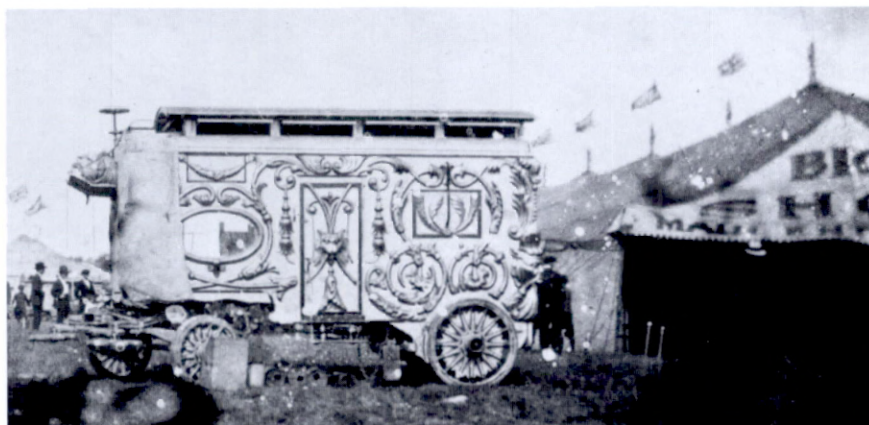
the beginning of the 1910 season. The "Call" went out in the *Clipper*, but not in the *Billboard*, in the March 12 issue. Personnel for the band were to report to A. R. Wheeler, still bandmaster after at least four years. Side Show people and band were to report to J. E. Ogden; 4, 6 and 8 horse drivers to Jack Kent (we wonder about 2 horse drivers because there were some pulling small cages in the parade); Canvasmen and seatmen to Harry Sells; property men to Owen Bradley; cooks and waiters to Edward Garland; porters and dining car boys to Fred Holman; animal men to William Henderson; and performers and all others to Jerry Mugivan. No mention is made of Bowers but we assume that he was in personal touch with his "lucky boys" and kept them well informed. It is

also possible that with the opening under the auspices of the Shrine that the show did not want them around on the opening date, so that they joined the show later.

Just before the opening a baby camel was born in the winter quarters. Camels, like most domesticated animals, are fairly fecund so that the show had no trouble in keeping its camel herd as large as its elephant herd. In the early days of this country circuses often carried more camels than elephants even though they rarely performed in the ring. The elephant herd had also changed slightly. There were still six bulls but Monte and Rubber had been replaced by two former Norris and Rowe Circus elephants named Dutch and Betty purchased from W. P. Hall.

Both the *Billboard* and *Clipper* reviews of the show's opening were very similar in coverage and may have been written by the same reporter. The one week stand was under the auspices of the Morocco Temple Shriners, and they

The Howes Great London ticket wagon as it appeared on the John Robinson Circus around 1922. The only change was the addition of heavy wheels. Gordon Potter Collection in Pfening Archives.







participated in the parade on Monday afternoon. The parade was "swellest ever seen in Jacksonville, the chariots, wagons and trappings all redolent with newness. The wardrobe of all the performers and others was outstanding. The tents and train were all the finest of any show that ever left winter quarters."

The opening performance Monday evening was given before a packed tent. Governor Gilchrist and his staff attended as did all the Shriners. The Equestrian Director was William O'Dale and it was suggested that he should be proud of the program he had assembled. Outstanding among the performers was the Eddy Family who were superb on the tight wire. Master Philip Eddy doing a backward somersault on the tight wire was a feature of the show. Rosa and Karoline Eddy in long dresses did a marvelous acrobatic act. Karoline Eddy also did a marvelous aerial act. William Wallett did top notch feats on his bare-back horse and got much applause.

From the foregoing quite skimpy review we get a poor idea of what the program was like. But about six weeks later a performers ad appeared in the *Billboard* from which we get the names of other acts with the show. The acts which were in the ad were Earl Wright, a trick tumbler featuring a somersault with a chair and a 22 foot drop and E. P. Carl, strong man, a first for an act of this kind on the show. There was a new

This reserved seat pass used in 1910 is printed in blue with a gold border. Pfening Archives.

Japanese acrobatic troupe, the Uyeno Family of six who later appeared on Sparks and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey and other shows. Also included were Doc Grant, clown; Ed Matthews, Hebrew clown; and Doc Grant teaming with George Allard in a comedy acrobatic act. Merrit Belew was the horse trainer with a six horse liberty act. He also presented a comedy mule hurdle act. Belew later became Equestrian Director and horse trainer for a number of years on the Christy Bros. Circus.

All these foregoing names were new to the Mugivan and Bowers operation, and none of the acts that had formerly been regulars on the show appeared. However, since the foregoing lists obviously did not include all the performers with the show it is possible that some of the old ones were still with it and just not listed. It is also interesting that by mid-June the band needed more musicians as A. R. Wheeler was advertising for them in the *Clipper*.

After the Montreal date on July 11 the show moved to Grand Mere. Other Canadian towns were Quebec on

The Uyeno Troupe from Japan was a feature of the 1910 Howes performance. Pfening Archives.



July 18 (also only one day), Three Rivers July 19, St. Johns July 26, Halifax August 1, Truro August 10, Sidney August 13, St. Hyacinthe August 27 and Cornwall August 31. The Canadian tour was completed Saturday, September 17 at Dunville. The show then played Niagara Falls on Monday the 19th followed by four small New York towns and then going into Pennsylvania at Kittanning, October 3 with the season ending at Charleroi on October 8. This was by far the shortest season ever for the show and instead of wintering in the south as it had always done previously, it chose Verona, Pennsylvania, for its winter quarters.

### Season of 1911

In 1911 the show remained on 16 cars, and of those the route book (the first one known to exist) tells us that there were two sleeping cars, a private car "Missouri" as well as a dining car which might otherwise have been called a privilege car. While the rest of the train make-up is not given, we assume that besides one advance car, there would have been either five stocks and six flats or four stocks and seven flats but most likely the former. All the flats and stocks were, of course, of the old 60 foot long wooden construction tie rod style.

Under the "Executive Staff" there are 44 names listed. But not all of these are what we would normally call executives or bosses. For instance there are ten ticket sellers listed of which two were apparently on the front of the side show. Of the remaining eight, two or three were probably in the wagons with another two or three selling reserved seats in the big top which leaves three or four unaccounted for. Perhaps they actually took tickets at the front door. It is also notable that the show had two legal adjusters, or in the common usage "fixers." This would tend to fortify the reputation of the early Mugivan and Bowers shows as being heavy on grift. Finally, Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers are listed as the proprietors but the only picture (aside from the band) in the route book was that of Jerry Mugivan which was captioned "Senior Partner." Apparently they were not equal partners. It is also interesting that Mrs. Bowers is only "Reserved Seat Ticket Taker" while Mrs. Mugivan as "Treasurer of the Candy Stands" was handling a very sizeable part of the show's income.

On the midway there was the main side show and perhaps a smaller pit show although there is no indication of such. The side show had a minstrel band of sixteen people of which probably three or four were comedians and dancers. There were twelve performers in the side show but we have no indication of what they did, except that we can assume that a couple of the eight



women listed were "oriental" dancers.

The performance in the big top had music supplied by C. H. Tinney and his band of 23 instruments. Tinney, besides leading the band also published the route book. He had replaced Bandmaster Wheeler and continued as bandmaster, also publishing the show's route books for several years. It is unfortunate for the historian that his route books were so lacking in the nature of the performers' acts and happenings during the season. The towns were all listed but no comments were given as to any unusual events that occurred. As far as the performers in the main show are concerned all we know is that there were 26 men and 13 ladies. Of this number probably six or seven were clowns. Some of the names were fairly well known while others would become so. Mr. and Mrs. Lowande were already bareback riders of some renown. Mr. and Mrs. Ed Millette and their son Ira later became outstanding aerialists with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus within a few years as did the Uyeno troupe of eight Japanese jugglers and acrobats. Two more of the performers, Tom and Joe Bell, followed this path. While the rest of the performers were undoubtedly competent in their acts, none were outstanding enough to get to the really big time. Nevertheless, we can assume that the performance was pleasing to the audiences.

The elephant herd remained at six: Major, Caradini Babe, Moms, Topsy, Dutch and Betty. We have no record of who was in charge of them, but it may have been S. W. King who was Superintendent of the Menagerie. However, since he had only six men working for him it would seem that he would have had his hands full caring for the elephants as well as all of the caged animals. It might be commented that an elephant herd of six for a show like this was a very respectable number.

The 1911 season opened at Oakmont, Pennsylvania, Saturday, April 15. This was a small town of about 4,000, and it was rather early in the season to open so far north for the weather must still have been on the cool side. Following the opening they played the next four weeks in the smaller towns under 20,000 population of western Pennsylvania. Cities larger than this that they visited were Johnstown April 21, Latrobe April 22, McKeesport April 29, New Castle, May 4, Youngstown, Ohio, May 5, and Niagara Falls, New York, May 13. The show entered Canada where it remained through August 19, about three months, about a month longer than their 1910 stay. It is interesting that only in the first four weeks in Canada did they visit towns or cities of any size: Hamilton, May 17, London May 22, and Toronto, June 5. From that time on the towns were all under 20,000 with most being under 10,000.



A small cross cage carrying two leopards in the 1910 Howes parade. Pfening Archives.

In fact as the show got farther west the towns visited got even smaller with half of them being under 1,000. It is hard to understand how such a show that presumably needed audiences of at least 2,000-3,000 a day to make ends meet could prosper in towns so small. The only answer can be that they drew large numbers of farmers from the surrounding countryside.

After this tour west through Canada it came back into the U.S. on Sunday, August 21 at Hope, Idaho, another small town of only 500 people. From

The final route card issued for the 1911 tour of the Howes Great London Shows was only 2 3/8" x 4" in size. Pfening Archives.

No. 30. 1911

OFFICIAL ROUTE

## HOWE'S GREAT LONDON SHOWS

Date	City	R. R.	Miles
Nov. 6,	Nogales, Ariz.,	S. P.	89
Nov. 7,	Tombstone, Ariz.,	S. P.	
	E. P. & S. W.	-	79
Nov. 8,	Bisbee, Ariz.,	S. P. & E. P.	
	& S. W.	-	55
Nov. 9,	Douglas, Ariz.,	S. P.	31
Nov. 10,	El Paso, Tex.,	S. P.	217
Nov. 11,	Alamogordo, N. M.,	E. P.	
	& S. W.	-	86

### SUNDAY

Nov. 13,	Tularosa, N. M.,	E. P. & S. W.	12
Nov. 14,	Corrigozo, N. M.,	E. P. & S. W.	45
Nov. 15,	Santa Rosa, N. M.,	E. P. & S. W.	129
Nov. 16,	Tucumcari, N. M.,	E. P. & S. W.	59

HOME, SWEET HOME

C. H. TINNEY, Mail Agent.

there a three and a half week tour through Idaho, Montana, Utah and Nevada took the show to southern California. There, starting on September 14 the show spent the next four weeks playing mostly the smaller towns as had been done in the recent past. The only large towns were Riverside, Pomona, Long Branch, Pasadena and Santa Barbara. All the other towns they showed in in California were 6,000 or under. This type of tour continued through Arizona and New Mexico, with only one Texas stand at El Paso November 10, through to November 16 where it closed at Tucumcari, New Mexico. From there it made a 392 mile run to Hutchinson, Kansas where it spent the winter. Besides El Paso, the only larger towns played in this part of the season were Albuquerque, October 23 and Bisbee, New Mexico, November 8.

When the season closed they had traveled from east to west in the U.S. and Canada 13,901 miles. The longest run was 275 miles from Blind River to Chapleau, Ontario, June 29, and the shortest was three miles from Port Arthur to Fort William, on Sunday July 2 for the Monday stand. There were five other runs over 200 miles and three others of under ten miles. There were twenty-six afternoon shows lost and two days lost. Russell, Manitoba, on July 12 was lost because of a wreck, and Daggett, the first California stand on September 14, was lost because of a difficult run of 176 miles through the mountains and a late arrival. However, since Daggett had only a population of 100 there probably was only a small loss.

### Season of 1912

Having wintered 1911-12 in Hutchinson, Kansas, the 1912 season started there. This year we have a little better information about the show. The route book, while still not giving us any data on the physical aspects of the show, does give a little more insight into the





performance by having some captioned pictures of the performers which tell us the type of act they had. The show had now grown to 20 cars. Since the porters were listed for the same four coaches as in 1911 we know that the increase was in the flats and stocks probably to 9 and 5 respectively. But the big change came in the staff turnover. Aside from Mrs. Bowers and Mrs. Mugivan there were only five in the staff who returned. They were L. C. Miller, in charge of the candy stands; Harry Sells, Master of Canvas; Ralph Crossett in charge of the side show; Joe Cramer, chef; and Florinda Zingaro, balloon man; and out of eleven ticket sellers only two were returnees plus Arthur Farmer in charge up town tickets.

It is interesting to note that on the staff was Dr. Jack Partello, M.D. Doctor Partello was, it is believed, only recently out of medical school. He remained with Mugivan and Bowers shows, later the American Circus corporation shows and finally with Terrell and Adkins on their Cole Bros. Circus. In the early 1900s to the 1940s or later it was fairly common for circuses to carry their own doctor. At least this was true of the medium sized to large shows. It is also

Louis Thilman, treasurer of the Howes show is shown at the ticket window in this 1911 photo. Among those standing in

**Howes Great London side show banner-line and midway in 1911. Pfening Archives.**

interesting that one of the ticket sellers on the show was a Howard Partello, whether a brother or father of the doctor we do not know. It is also noteworthy that there was a ticket seller listed as a Jack Partello which makes us wonder if the doctor performed double duty.

As to the performers returning from the 1911 show much the same pattern was followed. Of the 27 men and 12 lady performers only the two Lowandes, both bareback and high school riders, the three Millettes, head balancing aerialists, and the Uyeno troupe of nine Japanese acrobats were repeaters from the 1911 show. Others performing were aerialist Mildred Kellogg, the roman ring duo of Lorettes, Joe Bell, acrobat and mule rider, clown and acrobat W. J. Roscoe, bounding wire artist and producing clown, W. J. Langer and the LaDare Warner Trio of cyclists featuring Master James, the Little Whirlwind, the youngest (appearing to be about seven or eight from his pictures) unicycle and giraffocycle rider in the world. The music for the show and the street

front of the marquee are Whitey Crossett, side show manager, and Eddie Lewis, a ticket seller. Pfening Archives.



parade was again furnished by C. H. Tinney and his 19 men.

While the route book provides us with only the names and a few captioned pictures of the performers, and thus little real knowledge of the show, we are fortunate in that a news item about the show the *New York Clipper* did print a program. Thus for 1912 we know what the show looked like in the big top. The performance was given in two rings and a center stage under the direction of R. H. Dockrill, Equestrian Director as follows:

- 1—Tournament and grand entry.
- 2—Three swinging ladders over the two rings and center stage by Maude Earle, Mildred Kellogg and Zelda Earle.
- 3—The Uyeno Troupe doing foot perch acts in the two rings and a shoulder perch act on the center stage.
- 4—Elephants performed in the two rings directed by Joe Bell and Chris Zeitz, trainer, who formerly had been in charge of the Sells-Floto Circus herd. The bulls were the same as in 1911—Major, Caradini Babe, Moms, Topsy, Dutch and Betty.
- 5—Principal clown William Langer sang a comic song assisted by the seven other clowns.
- 6—Mrs. Nellie Lowande and Marie Meer in principal bareback acts.
- 7—Mrs. Millette, the Cahill Duo and Miss Uyeno in tight wire acts.
- 8—Leaps by the whole company.
- 9—Mr. and Mrs. Ira Millette in double trapeze over the center stage while over the rings Maude Earle and Mildred Kellogg performed in single trapeze acts.
- 10—Clown Band, Mr. Langer as Sousa, and seven others.
- 11—High school horses ridden by Miss Lowande, Zelda Earle, Maude Earle, Marie Meer and R. H. Dockrill.
- 12—Cahill Duo in an iron jaw turn.
- 13—In the rings Cecil Lowande and W. H. Melrose did somersault bareback acts and all 8 clowns were on the center stage.
- 14—The Uyenos with dancing barrels.
- 15—Comic prize fight with all the clowns.
- 16—Over the rings Ira Millette and Ed Millette in aerial head balancing acts.
- 17—Pot Pourri by the clowns.
- 18—Cecil Lowande, single jockey riding and Miss Meer and W. H. Melrose in double jockey riding.
- 19—Japanese juggling and Japanese magic in the rings and on the stage Japanese contortion acts.
- 20—Great Fourth of July Illumination by the clowns.
- 21—LaDare-Warner Trio (Glen LaDare, Agnes Warner and Master James) in trick bicycle riding with Master James, the youngest unicycle and Giraffocycle rider in the world.
- 22—Clown crazy number with the mules Maud, Peanut, Pete and Barney. The midway apparently had only the





This midway view of the Howes show was taken in Chester, Pa. September 6, 1912. The side show is on the right and a pit show is on the left. Pfening Archives.

principal side show although there was what appeared to be a small show of some sort uptown run by Hiram Garrison and Edward Mannie. What this uptown show was we have no record. The regular side show, managed by John Edwards, had ten performers among which were LaBelle Carmen, an oriental dancer, Dollie Asal who had been with the show and was to be for another few years as a palmist and mind reader, Prince Frizzo who was probably a "wild man" of some sort, probably black. The side show band and minstrels of ten people was led by Louie Gilbert.

Again we find the number of ticket sellers on the show, some 14, puzzling. If we assign two to the wagons, two to the side show that leaves ten to be assigned. Perhaps three or four can be accounted for as sellers of reserved seat tickets in the menagerie, connection and the big top, but this still leaves six unaccounted for. The only answer to this puzzle is that possibly this was a way of hiding those who were running the various illegal games of chance. While no mention is ever made of these we have good reason to believe that the Mugivan and Bowers shows, at least in the early days, were fairly heavy on grift. Others not unaccounted for are, besides the balloon seller, 12 candy butchers who I'm sure were active on the seats before and during the big show performance.

Howes Great London took quite a different route from 1911. Two weeks before it opened in Hutchinson, Kansas, on Saturday April 20, the advance car left under the management of Joseph G. Howard. Also on the car were contracting agent Charles Fick, 15 bill-posters and lithographers, a porter, and a cook, a total of 19 men. They led the show quickly through Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Illinois, and Michigan entering Canada for a Monday stand in Windsor, Ontario, on May 20. Before getting to Canada the four weeks in the U.S. had been played largely in good sized towns — Wichita, April 22, Oklahoma City April 29, Muskogee May 6, Hannibal May 13, Decatur May 15 and Fort Wayne May 17.



This four camel hitch pulled a lion cage in the Howes 1912 parade. Pfening Archives.

After entering Canada at Windsor it remained in Canada for the next six weeks and one day going through Ontario and Quebec before returning to the U.S. in Maine. During this tour of Canada it played in a fair number of towns of 10,000 or more population, including St. Thomas, Stratford, Galt, Guelph, Peterboro, and in Quebec at Lachine and Sherbrooke. They also played in three small towns of under 1,000 in Ontario for one show only, Cobocok June 1, Orono June 10 and Bancroft June 12. Why they chose to play these one show stands is unknown for, except in the case of Bancroft, they did not break up what would otherwise have been long runs. And even in the case of Bancroft, if they had skipped it and gone to the next town it would have been a run of 178 miles, a long but not impossibly long one night run, especially since it was on one railroad and thus did not involve any switching or transferring.

After a Monday stand at Megantic, Que., on July 1, the show crossed the border into Maine at Greenville. For the next 35 days they were in that state. Some of the larger towns visited were Houlton, Presque Isle, Caribou, Oldtown, Eastport, Calais, Ellsworth, Belfast, Waterville, Skowhegan, Augusta (the largest city played in Maine), Gardiner and Brunswick.

Shortly after its return to the U.S. in the July 20 issue of the *Billboard* the show placed a "want ad" for just about every category of circus people. This seemed typical of shows returning from Canada. Apparently many show people

left the shows going to Canada and had to be replaced upon the show's return to the U.S. In any event they needed side show people of all kinds, big show performers, clowns and bandmen of all instruments (including, strangely two double violins), drivers of four, six and eight horses, ring stock grooms, a Boss Hostler, and a Boss Property Man, cooks and waiters, candy butchers, seat men, polers and trainmen, local contractor, advance car manager and 24 hour man. With all these needs it is hard to understand how the show managed to keep going. But the show did move and August started, still in Maine, at Bath on the first and ended at Bethel on August 10.

Next the show moved into New Hampshire for nine days starting at Berlin August 12 and ending at Portsmouth on August 21. Then came a quick two day venture into Massachusetts at Newburyport on the 22nd and Haverhill on the 23rd, after which the show returned to New Hampshire followed by the only Vermont stop of the season, Brattleboro on August 29. In the August 31 *Billboard* they still needed help, but not as much. Big show performers, riders, producing clowns and musicians were still wanted. For the side show they needed ticket sellers and a novelty act. They still needed a Boss Property Man and all kinds of workmen.

After Brattleboro a quick three week trip through Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut ended Saturday September 21 at South Norwalk, Conn. One interesting town visited during that period was Provincetown, September 5, at the end of Cape Cod where the soil is so sandy it is hard to understand how the stakes could hold in the ground well

The 1912 parade is shown forming. The cage at the right was later on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. This photo was taken in Guelph, Ontario. Carver collection.





enough to keep the tents up. Also during this part of the New England trip they played the largest town of their tour, Fall River, September 11, with a population of 120,000.

Howes Great London left South Norwalk Saturday night September 21 with a long 205 mile jump to Havre de Grace, Maryland, to start the southern and final part of the 1912 season. The rest of the week was played on the Del-Mar peninsula including on Friday September 27, Salisbury where they encountered their first close competition of the season. They were preceded in Salisbury by the John H. Sparks Circus on the 11th and the Downie and Wheeler Circus on the 14th. Following them by about a week was Prairie Lillie and Nebraska Bill's Wild West. The last stand of that week was in Crisfield after which they made a Sunday run of about 190 miles, which included a ferry ride over Chesapeake Bay, to get into North Carolina.



Howes Great London cage ready for the parade in Guelph, Ontario, in 1912. Note the figure on the top. Carver collection.

Of the final two months of the season the first three weeks of October were spent in North and South Carolina, the largest towns played being Goldsboro and Sumter. The rest of the season was spent going back and forth between Georgia and Alabama. During these last six weeks the show played in only six towns of 10,000 people or more. They were Athens, October 23, Rome October 28, Anniston October 30, Griffin November 8, Americus November 12 and the closing stand and winterquarters city, Montgomery November 29.

In announcing their plans to winter in Montgomery at the Vandiver Fair Grounds, they stated that there would be 100 people there along with 100 horses and 200 menagerie animals. All these figures were exaggerations including the last which was a gross exaggeration. It was also mentioned that \$30,000 would be spent, also probably

an exaggeration, but, if that figure included canvas it was not too much of one.

### Season of 1913

Again, as the 1913 season opened for the Howes Great London Shows little information appeared in either the *Billboard* or the *New York Clipper* about the show. Nor did the route book help much. So the report of the show in 1913 is sketchy.

After wintering in Montgomery, Alabama, it opened the season there on Saturday, April 12. Ed Knapp had set the routes for both Howes Great London and Sanger's Great European shows. Howes moved quickly north through Alabama at Tuscaloosa, Bessemer, Jasper and Red Bay, Mississippi at Corinth, Tennessee at Milan and Mayfield and Kentucky at Marion and Morganfield and by Friday April 25 was in Evansville, Indiana. Over half of the early

southern towns were, as was the show's wont, under 5,000, but Evansville was a large city of about 70,000. From this point on about once a week a larger town of over 10,000 was played, but mostly the stops were at places in the neighborhood of 5,000. This was not a large show. So far as we can judge it traveled on 20 cars, up slightly from the preceding years. With one advance and five coaches this would leave 14 cars divided between flats and stocks with maybe 8 but probably 9 flats and the rest stock cars, all 60 footers.

There were 26 men and 14 ladies in the dressing top for a total of 40 people. Among the performers was R. F. Dockrill, Equestrian Director and horse trainer, a famous old timer; William Melrose and Nellie Lowande, bareback riders; Tetu Robinson, aerialist and tight wire acrobat; the Uyeno troupe of Japanese acrobats; and William Langer, chief clown with six or seven other joeys. These together with the others gave Howes, as usual, a very creditable show. Music to accompany the performance and to furnish two

**GREATEST ASSEMBLAGE OF ALL STAR PERFORMERS EVER ON THE SALARY LIST OF ANY ONE SHOW.**

**COMING YOUR WAY WITHOUT FAIL**  
THINK IT OVER!  
Ringing Record of 42 Years Phenomenal Success.

**HOWE'S GREAT LONDON SHOWS**  
THREE RINGS, DOUBLE MENAGERIE AND MUSEUM.  
(UNIONIZED) WITH  
Wild West, Caravan and Gorgeous Spectacular.

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Reputation Established Solely on Years of Experience.

Consider the Performances Given by the Howes' Great London Shows and Compare it With Any Other Shows you May See Before, But This Show Counts Them.

Everything, Legitimate, Nothing, Illegitimate. No Catch-Penny Shows or Gambling Tolerated. Our Own Directories Carry Complete Lists of the Local Police Departments.

**HIGHEST VALUED AND MOST PERFECT CLASS OF HIGH SCHOOL MENAGE HORSES!**  
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Largest Animal of his species ever displayed. No Houdini that they can be carried by a child.

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The remarkable feats of mastery displayed by these magnificent and powerful pachyderms together with their intelligence, stamp them as the most surprising of animal actors.

Every Representative of the Animal and Bird Kingdom. Animals everywhere considered unmatchable taught to do all that is possible. Superb Stable of Blue-White and Bay Horses. Stable of Porters. Highest, Idealized ARTISTS of This and Other Countries. Many and Better Than With Any Other Show. Perfect Animal Menagerie. The Most Perfect Menagerie Made. Friendly by Kindness. CONCERT BAND of Forty Soloists. Musicians who have entertained the Universe. Under the Leadership of Prof. Chas. W. Thompson.

All Tents Absolutely Fire and Waterproof. Fifty United States Patents in Use for Our Patrons. Your Comfort and Safety Our First Consideration.

Grounds and Streets Leading to Tents Skillfully Illuminated at Night. Huge Tents Lighted by Our Own Powerful and Perfect System of Lighting. Night Turned to Day.

**TWO TICKET WARMS. NO DELAYS. NO TEDIOUS WAITS. NO JOSTLING. NO GROWLING.**  
**OUR SYSTEM FOR CARING FOR PATRONS IS PERFECT.**  
Two Performances Daily—11:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Admission Free. Evening Performances at 8:00 p.m. Shows to Menagerie, Band, Concert, Museum, Congress of Nations and Congress of Nations Open to All. Exhibitions that No Other Show Would Dare Offer as a Free Entertainment. With Any Other Attraction It Would Be a Failure.

Be sure to see with an agreement entered into between Howes' Great London Shows and the Proprietors of other Leading Exhibitions, this is the ONLY GREAT SHOW COMING HERE THIS SEASON.

This herald was used for the Clinton, Ontario, date on June 10, 1913. Pfening Archives.

bands for the parade was again provided by Cal Tinney and his 20 musicians. Besides his own cornet Tinney had five other cornets, six clarinets, three trombones, one alto, two bass tubas and two on drums, a very substantial music group.

In the third week of the season the show was in Illinois and Indiana at Paris April 30, Greencastle, May 1, Shelbyville May 2 and Connersville May 3, but by the middle of the fourth week had moved into Ohio and was at Lima May 7. In the fifth week, except for a Thursday May 15 date in Beaver Falls, Pa., it was all in Ohio at Barberton, Salem and East Liverpool. The next two weeks were all in Pennsylvania. Vandergrift, the home of the Sparks family,



was played Tuesday May 27 with the larger towns on the route being Carnegie, McKees Rock, Monessen and Dubois with 15,000 people on Friday May 30. The eighth week after Warren June 3 and Dunkirk, N.Y., June 4, took the show into Canada after Niagara Falls with a population of 30,000 on Thursday June 5.

For the next two months through Thursday August 7 the show played through Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. Except for Toronto on June 16, Ottawa, Quebec, Halifax in July and St. John on August 4 most of the towns were very small, many under 5,000 in population. However, two items of interest occurred while the show was in Canada. Toronto, the biggest city visited, gave the show large crowds at both the afternoon and evening performances. In fact, up to that point business in Canada had been excellent. The other item of note was the marriage in Quebec on Sunday July 6 of principal clown, W. J. Langer and Gladys Bradbury of the four musical Bradburs of the side show. The ceremony was performed in the side show top. A wedding supper was given in the dining top after the ceremony and the couple received many beautiful and useful gifts.

(Season-1913.)

**Coming To Milledgeville**  
Friday, October 31

**FORTY-SECOND ANNUAL TOUR**

**HOWE'S**  
**GREAT LONDON SHOWS**

**3 Huge Rings, Triple Menagerie, Elevated Theatre**  
**Stage, Museum and Real Horse Fair**

Over 1,000 Men, Women, Horses and Animals.  
Two Trains of Double Length Cars will bring it to you.

**GRAND, GIGANTIC, MORAL MUSEUM OF MARVELS.**  
The Great Triple Golden Menagerie—INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL CONVENTION



**300** of the most magnificent, of all celebrated of breeds, Biggest and Noblest, Smallest and Prettiest, HORSES and PONIES assembled. OUR HORSE TENTS ARE OPEN FREE to everybody.

**\$25,000 HERD OF PERFORMING ELEPHANTS**  
**JUMBO** A most colossal Double-Humped Wonder of the CAMEL WORLD—Heading the Largest Drove on Exhibition.

20 Lady and Gentlemen Riders—40 Leapers and Aerial Artists—30 Acrobatic and Special Gymnasts—40 Funny Clowns. Under the skillful guidance of Mr. R. H. DOCKRILL, Equestrian Director.

Litter of Lions, Tigers, and Leopards Cubs—"MITE," the Infant Kangaroo, in the Kindergarten Department of our Triple Menagerie.

#### FIVE BANDS OF MUSIC.

Headed by Prof. Charles Tinney's Band of Forty Excellent Soloists—Music of all Nations.

**OVER A MILE OF GORGEOUS, GLITTERING SPECTACLE**—In a DAZZLING, Delightful, Double Street Parade, at 10 o'clock in the morning.

**GRAND FREE OUTSIDE EXHIBITION**  
When parade returns to the grounds, and again at 6:30 in the evening. Two performances daily, irrespective of weather. All tents sun and water proof. Seats for 10,000 patrons. Gentlemen uniformly uniformed ushers.

This Howes newspaper ad was used for the October 31, 1913 stand in Milledgeville, Ga. Pfening Archives.



C. H. Tinney's 20 piece band in 1913. Tinney is standing at right in the second row. Pfening Archives.

The side show was a fairly large one, larger than would be expected on a 20 car show. It was fronted by two ticket sellers and a bannerline with ten large banners plus a single width entrance banner for a total length of about 120 feet. There was a band of 11 pieces, two comedian-dancers and two soubrettes. W. H. McFarland, the show's manager, did outside ballyhoo and an inside impalement act (sword throwing). Other acts were an illusionist; Electric Lady; Snake enchantress; Trained Dogs; Punch and Judy; Magician; the Four Musical Bradbury Sisters; a Palmist and Mind Reader; and the usual Oriental Dancing Troupe with four girl dancers and two men musicians. This latter group charged an extra fee and was "For Men Only." Many of the smaller circuses of the 1920s and 1930s had such acts in their side shows where the local police and political palms had been properly greased. They were the equivalent to today's strip shows with an almost "anything goes" performance. While no mention is made in

Three of the Howes elephants are shown with banners during the parade in Guelph, Ontario in 1912.



any published material about the show we must also assume that there were games of chance in the side show too, shell games and three card monte being the usual ones.

After the Canadian tour the show returned to the States at Richford, Vermont on Friday August 8. On the following Monday the show was in St. Johnsbury. From here a reader of the *New York Clipper* wrote that the circus was a 20 car show, thus confirming our earlier assumptions. All railroad cars, cages and wagons were reported as being red. It is interesting that available photos of baggage wagons suggest that the name of the show never appeared on their sides. It was stated that the menagerie was larger than usual for a show of this size. It also spoke well of the performance stating that all the acts were high class.

After nine more August stands in the principal towns of Vermont, including Bellows Falls, Rutland, Burlington, and Montpelier, the show moved into New York still playing mostly very small towns, the largest being Geneva on August 27 and Corning on August 29. The next day, Saturday August 30 it was in Pennsylvania at Wellsboro followed by four more Pennsylvania towns including Butler on September 3 and Washington on September 4. A two week tour of Ohio followed with Cam-





bridge and Ironton being two of the largest places played while Waverly was the smallest with only 1,900 people.

Chris Zeitz was again in charge of the elephants. The same six animals that were on the show the previous year started out the season. But somewhere in mid-season, the exact date is not known, Dutch was shipped to the Yankee Robinson Circus. Dutch was not replaced on Howes Great London so the herd from that time on had only five elephants.

Only ten weeks now remained of the season and Howes Great London Shows headed south, opening the twenty-third week Monday September 15 at Bluefield, West Virginia. This week also had

**This snake den was on the Howes show in 1912. It is shown here in a 1934 parade on Hagenbeck Wallace.**

two dates at Johnson City, Tennessee, and Spruce Run, North Carolina, where because of bad weather and muddy grounds, no performances were given. These were the only dates during the season that were completely lost. The next three plus weeks were spent in North Carolina playing almost entirely small towns under 5,000. Only two towns of any size were visited, Elizabeth City on October 6, and Wilmington on October 13. Only one show was given at Wilson, because of a bad lot and rain. Next the show moved into

South Carolina and played even smaller towns, many in the 1,500-2,000 range. To make a stop in these small towns there must have been a substantial rural population to draw from. The largest town visited was Sumter on October 23 while two days later at Barwell with only 2,000 people one show was given.

The next three weeks were all in Georgia with not a single town of over 5,000 and one, Monticello, Monday, November 10 with only 1,900, not surprisingly had only one show. And finally, the circus moved into Montgomery, Alabama, on Thursday November 20 for the closing date and winter quarters.

All in all 1913 was a highly successful season. Howes Great London Shows traveled 11,161 miles in sixteen states and three Canadian provinces. The longest run was 213 miles from Drummondville, Quebec, to Quebec City, and the shortest runs of twelve miles each were Carnegie, Pennsylvania, to McKees Rock on May 20; from Niagara Falls to St. Catharines, Ontario, on June 7 and from Sidney to North Sidney, Nova Scotia, on July 29. There were eleven runs of over 100 miles in the two months the show was in Canada and ten in the three months after it returned to the States. There were 191 dates advertised of which the two previously mentioned were lost. The average nightly run was about 61 miles, rather longer than usual for a show of this size.

## BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS



Thomas L. Finn's Great Eastern Shows toured only a few seasons. This letterhead dates from 1913, and is in red and black. This design was used by a number of circuses, and except for a slight change in the clown and lady rider on the left, it is the same as the current *Bandwagon* letterhead.



# CIRCUS WAGON HISTORY FILE

## The Great Wallace and Campbell Bros. Dragon Calliopes

by Fred Dahlinger Jr.

The practice of constructing twin wagons originated at an early date in the history of circus parade vehicles. There are indications that several sets of twin bandchariots built by the same firm were in existence in the 1840's and 1850's. The earliest documented twins of which a photo exists was the pair of golden horse bandchariots imported in 1868 for the George F. Bailey and Great European circuses.<sup>1</sup> These early sets were owned by two circuses whose owners were joint partners in the two shows.

A different type of twins came into existence in 1878, when a non-telescoping version of the 1871 Howes Great London telescoping globe tableau, the "Chariot of Commerce," was built by Fielding for the Adam Forepaugh

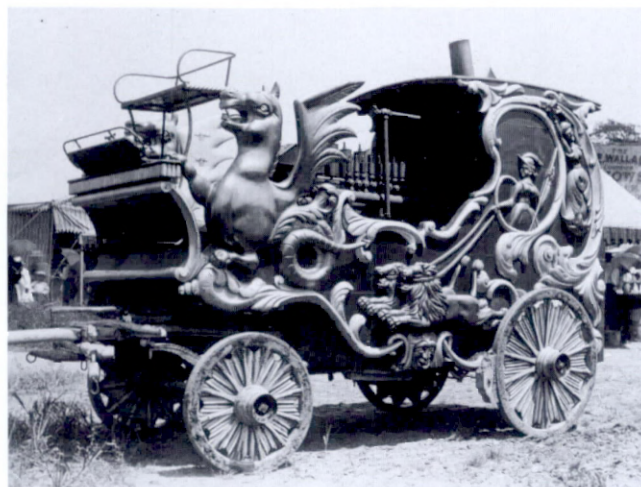
The figure carvings were gold leafed but the scrollwork was silver on the Wallace calliope. The theme which the carvings are intended to represent is not known. Alex Clark collection.

circus. The fact that the 1871 vehicle inspired the copy was confirmed by a note to that effect in the March 2, 1878 *New York Clipper*. The twin practice continued to be employed in the 1880's two sets of tableaus on the Sells Bros. and S. H. Barrett circuses being known from photographs. The Ringling tableau den series of 1893 included several sets of twins and in the first decade of the twentieth century the practice was revived by the Sullivan & Eagle wagon building firm of Peru, Indiana.

Sullivan & Eagle originated in the mid 1860's when Samuel Heffley sold his blacksmith shop to Theodore J. Sullivan (1840-1920). Sullivan enlarged the business, taking George Graf as a partner from 1873 to early 1879, when he was succeeded by Henry A. Eagle (1850-1938).<sup>2</sup> In 1884 they began the manufacture of circus wagons and allied vehicles, a turn no doubt influenced by the entry of Peru livery stable owner Benjamin E. Wallace (1847-1921) into the circus business that year.

Sullivan & Eagle was widely known for their steam calliopes, the majority of which were of the split roof design, an arrangement which dated back to the mid 1870's. Of all the calliopes they built, possibly the most familiar are the twins furnished to two Gentry Bros. shows in early 1902. Recent discoveries confirm that at the same time the Gentry twins were passing through the Sullivan & Eagle shop, another twin was also being constructed, copied in almost the same manner that Forepaugh duplicated the Howes globe telescope. In this case, it was a calliope for the 1902 Campbell Brothers circus, styled after the famous dragon calliope Sullivan & Eagle had supplied to the Great Wallace circus a few years before.

The decorations on the Campbell calliope were not as deeply or as finely carved as those on the earlier Wallace wagon. Close comparison of this view with the side view of the Wallace calliope highlights many differences in the details.





The distinguishing feature of both wagons was a pair of large carved dragons, located on either side of an elevated driver's seat.<sup>3</sup>

Before developing the logic which led to the dragon twins discovery, it would be worthwhile to review why their existence was obscured for so many years. Generally the cause can be attributed to a handed down history of the Great Wallace dragon which unknowingly combined the history of the two wagons. It was accepted by all students of the subject, the author included, until the curtain covering their overlapping existence was drawn away by additional documentation and the all important photographs.<sup>4</sup>

The "one dragon" theory can be summarized as follows. A zenith in the career of Ben Wallace was reached in the winter of 1906-1907 when he acquired the well built Carl Hagenbeck circus. This meant Wallace could select between his smaller and older dragon calliope and the big two year old Carl Hagenbeck calliope to tail the 1907 Hagenbeck-Wallace parade. For good business reasons he chose the latter. The choice was confirmed by the presence of the big Hagenbeck calliope in photos of the 1907 to 1911 Hagenbeck-Wallace parades. Where the dragon calliope went after it became surplus in 1907 was neatly resolved by the appearance of a dragon calliope in the famous Campbell Bros. circus parade panorama, generally believed to have been taken about 1908 by Joseph Young of Oberlin, Kansas.<sup>5</sup> Even the later discovery of a photo of the Campbell dragon calliope on the 1915 Barton & Bailey circus, which showed carving details different from those of the Wallace dragon, did not arouse concern because carving changes are commonplace in circus wagon history.

This logical sequence was first questioned when it was learned that Sullivan & Eagle had built a calliope for Campbell Bros. in 1902, one whose demise could not be found in accounts of the various disasters the show suffered. The suspicion that the Wallace and Campbell vehicles were not one and the same was finally confirmed by the finding of adequate illustrations of both calliopes, especially two photographs which place a dragon calliope on both shows in late 1904.

Ben Wallace's first steam calliope was built by Henry Ohlsen of Cincinnati in 1884.<sup>6</sup> Based upon the generally reliable recollections of Harry Parkhurst, a long time Wallace elephant handler, it is believed this calliope was the one sold about 1899, allegedly to Willie Sells. Information available at the moment does not refute or support this claim, however, it has generally been believed that the dragon calliope replaced it in 1899. An 1898 Wallace route book is not known to exist, but copies of the 1897, 1899 and 1900 Wallace route



The only known parade photo of the Wallace dragon is this view taken in Peru, Indiana. The calliope player, probably Don

Wilson, is adjusting the steam supply valve. The Lentz Bros. Studio in Peru took this photograph about 1905 or 1906.

books are available. They note the new clown ticket wagon and big lion den of 1897 and the new hippo den of 1900, but no mention is made anywhere of the new calliope. Considering this lack of information, 1898 may have marked the calliope's debut, rather than 1899.

Notes made by Chalmer Condon indicate the Wallace calliope carvings were executed by Messrs. Graf, Schram and Deutestadt of the Sullivan & Eagle firm. Stylistically it is unlike their other well known calliopes of the 1902 to 1910 period. The carved lyre on its back door is a design signature found only on two other wagons. These were the Gentry twin which was later owned by the American Circus Corporation and the dragon calliope built for the Campbells, both 1902 Sullivan & Eagle products. The body style was a combination of two forms, having the front end of a Fielding style bandchariot and the rear half of a split roof calliope. Dragons had

been used to decorate calliopes as early as 1874, but in the Wallace vehicle the theme was explored to the ultimate. The passing of the dragon calliope at the end of the Wallace parade was a spectacle worth waiting to see, with shooting spires of white steam blasting through rolling clouds of black coal smoke, accompanied by the shrieking music of the whistles.

With the separation of the Wallace and Campbell stories, it is evident that illustrations of the Wallace dragon are rather rare. A search of the larger circus photo archives has yielded only four views of it, including three which are relatively well known. Fortunately the photos which are available include excellent closeups of both sides, along with details of the front and rear ends. The earliest and best shots are a pair marketed years ago by the famed calliope player, Ernest "Deacon" Albright. These may have been taken by calliope builder George Kratz, since Albright's holdings included negatives known to have been taken at Kratz's Evansville, Indiana, shop. The two photos were made at the same time and place, the left side view conveniently showing the

In 1913 the Campbell equipment was used to equip a fifteen car trick out of the Hall farm called Cole Bros. This photo shows the calliope in parade at Drake, North Dakota on May 31, 1913.





front of a Wallace sideshow marquee, confirming the association. Unfortunately no Wallace bannerline photos showing the same banner style have turned up, leaving the photos undated. A view in one series of Lentz Bros. Studio photos shows the Wallace dragon in parade at Peru, headed south on Broadway. The set is believed to date prior to 1907 since no Hagenbeck wagons are found in the four picture group. This series has also resisted attempts at dating.

The only "new" photo of the Wallace dragon to turn up, and the most crucial one, is a glimpse of it on the lot at Water Valley, Alabama, on October 18, 1904. The identification of the photo was written on the page of the album to which it was affixed.<sup>7</sup> Even if the date is in error, the photos are definitely 1902 or later because the big bandchariot Albert Bode built for the 1902 Wallace show is in the same set.<sup>8</sup>



The 1904 photo is the last documentation confirming the existence of the Wallace dragon. No written mention of a calliope on the Wallace show has been found in 1905 or 1906. The only clue to its demise may be an advertisement placed by Robert L. Waldron, a minor showman from Carruthersville, Missouri, in the January 6, 1906 *Billboard* offering "9 dragon calliope pipes \$5." The term "pipes" has been a misnomer for whistles since the early days of the instrument. No known Wallace wreck accounts include the loss of a calliope, so why whistles from a dragon calliope were in the possession of Waldron remains unexplained.

We can only speculate why Sullivan & Eagle copied the Wallace dragon for the Campbell brothers in 1902. Possibly the Campbells saw it on the Wallace show at one time or inspected it on a trip to Wallace's quarters before they

ordered their calliope from the Peru builder. The presence of the Gentry twin calliopes in the Sullivan & Eagle shop, in advance of the Campbell calliope, suggests the Gentry order sparked the idea.

The dragon was not the first calliope on the Campbell show. In 1901 they carried the old Adam Forepaugh calliope, acquired from Leon Washburn in December 1900.<sup>9</sup> Before October 1901 they sold it to their boyhood friend, Fred Castle, an old time circus leaper who had joined the show in 1897. Castle offered to lease it to other showmen via an illustrated ad in the October 12, 1901 *New York Clipper*.

The *Billboard* described the new Campbell wagon as sixteen feet long. It housed a 32 whistle instrument, identified as a Thomas J. Nichol product from later photographs. After the Campbell show's April 26, 1902 opening, the local *Fairbury Journal* noted that the parade

show indicates the series to be Campbell and not Sells & Downs. Although it appears down the street, adequate detail is discernible to positively identify the calliope as the Campbell dragon. The existence of this Campbell photograph and the October 18, 1904 photo of the Wallace dragon leads to the obvious conclusion that at one time two dragon calliopes existed.

The existence of twins is buttressed by a comparison of the available views of each wagon. The major differences to be noted include the following:

#### Boilers:

The Wallace boiler has a steam chest shaped like an inverted truncated cone, rising well above the whistles. The Campbell boiler was shorter and had straight sides, with high, cone shaped, breeching.

#### Instruments:

The Wallace calliope had about 20 whistles, the Campbell had 32.

#### Carvings:

The carving quality of the Wallace calliope was superior to that of the Campbell calliope, the latter having less relief and detail. Major differences can be seen in the dragon ears (the Wallace ears extend out of the top of the head, the Campbell out of the side), the nose and eye construction, and the tails (the Campbell tail had a pronounced ridge, missing on the Wallace dragon). The Wallace lions had sculptured manes and hollowed areas on the legs whereas the Campbell animals were almost doglike, with recessed manes and solid legs. Especially different were the large sweeping scroll carvings at the ends of the wagons, the Wallace carving being wide and detailed, the Campbell carving thin and simple.

Additional photographs dated 1906, 1908, 1909 and 1910 are available to confirm the presence of the 1902 Campbell twin on the Campbell show, ruling out the possibility that the Wallace wagon was transferred to that show at a later date.<sup>13</sup> The last dateable photo of the wagon on the Campbell outfit shows it in parade at Anna, Illinois on September 19, 1910.<sup>14</sup>

An attempt to extend the 1911 Campbell tour in the South proved to be a dismal failure and eventually led to the failure of the Campbell brothers circus during the 1912 season. The show was acquired by a syndicate of Omaha, Nebraska showmen in November 1912 for \$25,000. Whatever plans they had for the property fell through, and the entire show eventually became the property of William P. Hall, the famed horse trader of Lancaster, Missouri.<sup>15</sup> The Campbell equipment was utilized

**The Campbell Bros. calliope had undergone some remodeling by the time William P. Hall sold it to Barton and Bailey in 1915. Donald Carson collection.**

crowd was somewhat disappointed because the new calliope hadn't arrived when the show debuted.<sup>10</sup> It finally arrived several days later. There are several references to the new calliope's presence on the show, where Bud Horn, the "Calliope King," showed the natives what could be done with a new steamer.<sup>11</sup>

The earliest known photograph of the Campbell dragon is in a series of parade shots taken at Manhattan, Kansas on August 26, 1904.<sup>12</sup> Competing Sells & Downs date sheets posted for a subsequent Monday, September 5, 1904 date pinpoint the year and location of the set. The presence of the No. 1 bandwagon, cages and ticket wagon of the Campbell

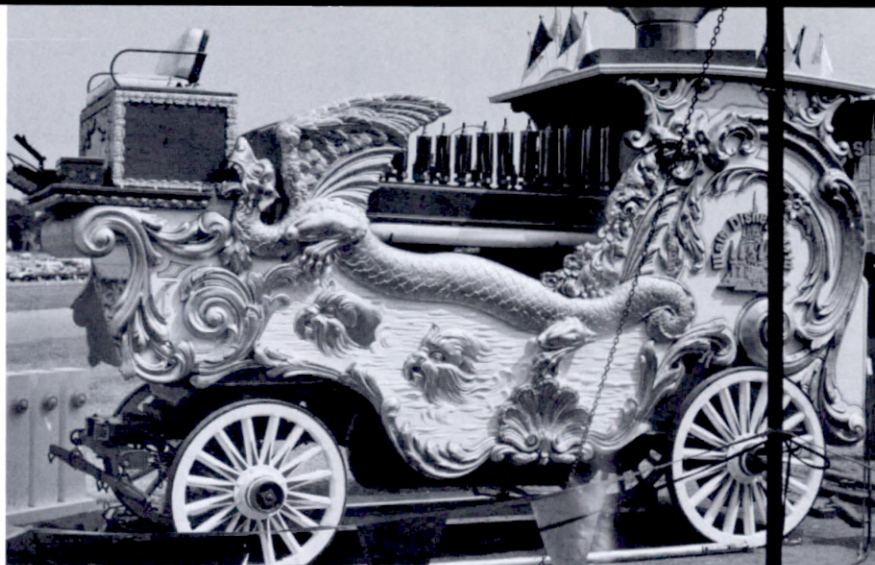


in launching a fifteen car show called Cole Bros. Circus in 1913. A photograph taken at Drake, North Dakota on May 31, 1913 confirms the Campbell dragon was on that circus.<sup>16</sup> The late Bob Bernard discovered a set of photographs identified as 1915 Barton & Bailey, another show framed at the Hall farm. The views place the Campbell dragon on this circus, the largest ever framed at Lancaster. The surviving carvings in the 1915 photo agree in all respects with the 1902 Campbell calliope and not the earlier Wallace calliope.

The Campbell dragon left the Hall farm permanently in 1920 when it was sold to Rhoda Royal, D. C. Hawn, and Harry Hunt for the new Rhoda Royal circus. Bill Woodcock is the authority for placing it on the Royal show, although at the time he believed it was the Wallace dragon calliope. The dragon was used on the Royal show through its last year in 1922. Woodcock was the last knowledgeable person to see the Campbell dragon, in storage at Vandiver Park in Montgomery, Alabama in 1923. After this sighting it joined the Wallace dragon in obscurity.

Since their existence may have caused some confusion, a word about the two recent calliopes constructed in the spirit of the Sullivan & Eagle dragon design is in order. In 1956 Walt Disney arranged for the construction of a calliope wagon to house a 20 whistle hybrid circus instrument rescued from the Bradley and Kaye amusement park. The featured carving was a winged dragon, copied in a very artistic fashion from a Marcus C. Illions carousel chariot. Additional carvings were copied from other circus wagons Disney owned at the time, including the Orchestmelochor, the Swan bandwagon and a Barnum & London tableau den. After a short utilization in the Mickey Mouse Circus at Disneyland, the calliope made several cameo appearances in half a dozen movies and then went into storage. The original instrument was recently replaced by a larger air powered calliope built by George Rosekilly. Employing a tape playback system, it was taken on a tour of the state fair circuit in 1981 to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Walt Disney World, and has since been used in other Disney promotions.

The second replica was constructed for the Cedar Point amusement park near Sandusky, Ohio, in the early 1960's to house an instrument acquired from Harry Shell. The instrument was a hybrid, having Harry Shell whistles on a Nichol manifold which had a showboat and circus pedigree. The body was built by Lee Gaeke of Bucyrus, Ohio, who used molded plastic carvings to simulate the original wood decoration. After being used for several years at the Cedar Point amusement park and other Ohio celebrations, it was donated to the Hale Farm near Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>17</sup>



Bill Rhodes took this photo of the Disney calliope during a state fair appearance in 1981. The whistles project a pseudo steam calliope appearance, but they are powered by air.

The author would like to thank Joseph T. Bradbury, the Circus World Museum, the Fairbury Public Library, and John F. Polacsek for their contributions to this article.

#### Footnotes

1. Discovered by Richard E. Conover and documented in Fred D. Pfening III, "The Orchestmelochor Wagon and Its Origins," *Bandwagon*, XVI, 6, pp. 22-24.
2. This George Graf was not the well known circus model builder, but they were related.
3. *Billboard*, April 5, 1902, p. 6.
4. The traditional dragon calliope history can be found in *Bandwagon*, II, 3, p. 3 and XIII, 6, p. 24.
5. Campbell Bros. did not play Oberlin in 1908, but the parade lineup as shown in the panorama matches the Campbell parade recorded in the photos Jules Borquin took at Horton, Kansas on August 20, 1908. (See *White Tops*, XLI, 5, pp. 26-31.) The background of the panorama is not Horton, but may be Norton, Kansas, a city only thirty five miles from Oberlin. On August 27, 1908 the Campbell show played Norton, identified as the location of another set of Campbell parade shots which were recently deposited in the Circus World Museum Library. There are, however, two minor differences between the two sets of panorama photographs.
6. *New York Clipper*, January 5, 1884, p. 713.
7. Original at Circus World Museum.
8. See the author's article "The Bode Wagon Company" in *Bandwagon*, XXVI, 6, pp. 5-11, for references to this bandchariot.
9. *Billboard*, December 29, 1900, p. 10.
10. *Fairbury (Ne.) Journal*, May 5, 1902.
11. See for example *Billboard*, April 12, 1902, p. 5; *New York Clipper*, May 31, 1902, p. 313.
12. Original at Kansas State Historical Society.
13. *Billboard*, March 16, 1907, p. 21; original in Circus World Museum; Ed Bady collection; author's collection, respectively.
14. Original in author's collection.
15. *Billboard*, November 9, 1912, p. 22.
16. Original in Circus World Museum.
17. *Bandwagon*, IX, 1, p. 22.

Not as artistic as the Disney calliope, but adhering closer to the dragon calliope arrangement, was the calliope built for George Roose in the early 1960's. Shown at Cedar Point in this John Polacsek photo, the calliope can now be seen at Hale Farm near Cleveland.





# JOHN ROBINSON'S EARLY DAYS

by Stuart Thayer

The attempt to determine the early whereabouts of the great John Robinson has been essayed three times in these pages. Richard Conover wrote, "Concerning the Origin of the John Robinson Circus and the Myth of 1824," in 1953. Robert L. Parkinson contributed "John Robinson Circus," in 1962. Melvin J. Olsen reported locating one of Conover's references in 1954 in "Newspaper Story Places John Robinson on Raymond & Wahring (sic) Show of 1839." Conover also explored the subject in a book titled *Give 'Em a John Robinson*, in 1965. All these efforts combined to establish that the use of the year 1824 as that of the founding of Robinson's first show was a myth. The date appears in Gilbert Robinson's *Wagon Show Days*. The explanation of how these investigations were conducted is given very lucidly in Parkinson's article. Much of the balance of the comment by these three gentlemen on Robinson's early career was hypothetical. In this paper we will seek to fill this gap, though by no means will we offer enough to state that the mystery is no more.

Robinson was born in 1807 or 1808 in South Carolina. He ran away from home as a boy and after several adventures caught on with a circus troupe. A biography published in a compendium of prominent Cincinnati residents in 1872 lists shows that Robinson apparently told the writer he had served with. These were, in order, Page's Menagerie, Parson & McCracken's Circus, Aaron Turner, Stewart's Amphitheatre, Hawkins' Circus, Benedict & Haddock and the Zoological Institute.

Captain Page's Menagerie, not called that in advertisements, was on tour in 1823 and 1824 and, certainly, a fifteen year-old boy might have found employment with it. McCracken's Circus, owned by Samuel B. Parsons, was an Albany company that existed from 1825 to 1827 and was also on the road in 1828, but under S. V. Wemple's management. Robinson's name does not appear on any of the rosters we have found for this company, so if he joined it after his sojourn with Page, it must have been as a workman.

Even apprentice riders, as a rule, were listed by small shows of that time so that the cast would appear as large as possible.

Aaron Turner was in the business continuously from 1826 and Robinson might have joined him in any year.

Stewart's Amphitheatre, a Boston winter show, also fails to list Robinson in either of its two seasons, 1831 and 1832. This last is very telling for most of the performers at Stewart's are only seen in these two seasons, indicating that absolutely everybody was advertised. Thus, we draw the conclusion that John Robinson was not a performer before 1832.

Hawkins and Benedict & Haddock are more difficult to deal with. No show with only Hawkins' name on it has been found and Benedict & Haddock are completely unknown to us. However, the first time John Robinson's name appears in any advertising now known was with the Boston Circus in Columbus, Ohio on November 24, 1832. The Boston Circus seems to have been managed by Hawkins, Eldred and Callahan. The old man must have forgotten Eldred and Callahan when he gave the interview for the Cincinnati tome.

Hawkins' name appears only in the management of this show. Eldred was not Gilbert Eldred, Robinson's future and long-time partner, but his older brother, Edward S. Eldred (1811-1850), making his debut in the circus business. Callahan was D. C. Callahan, a clown who had first performed in 1826. They took out a license in all three names in Detroit on November 14, 1832 and without that reference we wouldn't know to whom the Boston Circus belonged.

They did not list themselves in advertising, saving Callahan, who was a performer as well as an owner, in either Detroit or Columbus and those are the only two dates we have. T. Alston Brown in the July 9, 1861 *New York Clipper* refers to "Bancker's Company," meaning James W. Bancker, and gives a roster for an Albany, New York, stand of April 9, 1832. Most of the people on it are also listed by the Boston Circus in Columbus, so there can be little doubt that it is the same troupe.

In the program printed in the *Ohio State Journal* of November 24, 1832, appears John Robinson, stilt dancer. Thus, after possibly nine years with the circus, our hero finally gets his name in print. It is interesting that he was not yet a rider, the occupation at which he gained his later fame.

We have found no references to him in 1833, but in February, 1834, Eldred's troupe, now owned only by Edward S. Eldred, and called the American Circus, joined with that of J. Purdy

BY REQUEST.  
FOR TWO NIGHTS MORE.



## MENAGERIE AND CIRCUS UNITED.

**M**ESSRS. CRANE and ELDRED most respectfully inform the Ladies and Gentlemen of Washington and its vicinity, that they will exhibit their Menagerie and Circus together, on FRIDAY and SATURDAY EVENINGS, the 31st of October and 1st of November, at the moderate price of TWENTY-FIVE CENTS. The Pavilion is fitted up in genteel style, on the Centre Market Square.

Among their collection of animals, will be found the

Great India Elephant, PIZARRO, the largest ever imported into the United States. The Zebra, from the Cape of Good Hope. The Jackall, or Lion's Provider. An enormous Anaconda of Ceylon; accompanied by the great Boa Constrictor, or Strangling Serpent, of Java; and the beautiful Embroidered Boa of Bengal—with the real Diamond Serpents of Shandzangor, and two of those extraordinary reptiles of Pemborah or Python.

The above-mentioned Serpents are perfectly harmless, and may be handled by the most timid lady or child, with the most perfect safety.

The White-footed Antelope of the Andes. The Argale, or Mouflan of Kamschatka, or the northern part of Russia. The Hunting Leopard of Africa. With a great variety of BIRDS, and minor Animals, &c.

Master Spencer will make his appearance in the circle and go through many pleasing attitudes on his horse Wild Fire.

Ring-master Mr. Rowe—Clown Mr. Eldred.

Mr. Rowe, the daring horseman, who stands unrivalled by any Equestrian in America, will go through many pleasing feats of horsemanship, and conclude by leaping over four separate garters with hands and feet tied.

Don Perez, from Peru, will go through his astonishing performance with the Italian Sticks. He will also introduce his wonderful Globe, 16 inches in diameter, which he will balance on both feet, and conclude by dancing a Hornpipe feet upwards, with a pole on them 10 feet in length.

Mr. Robinson will make his appearance on two horses, and go through many pleasing attitudes; jump garters backwards and forwards, and conclude his act by carrying three boys on his shoulders in various positions.

Metamorphose of the Sack, by Messrs. Brock and Eldred.

Mr. Rowe will appear in the character of a Roman Gladiator, on the celebrated horse Masinello.

The evening's entertainment to conclude with the laughable farce of the

### MILLER'S FROLIC.

Head Miller	-	Mr. Robinson.
Mary Jenkins	-	Jackson.
Miller's Son,	-	Pomeroy.
Miller's Clerk	-	Rowe.
Strapall	-	Shaver.
Apprentice	-	Master Miller.
Clown	-	Mr. Eldred.
Musician	-	Cook.

Doors open at half past six, and performances to commence at 7.

Seats will be prepared for the Ladies. Good music will accompany the exhibition.

Clown's Benefit on Saturday Evening.  
Oct. 31

Robinson appeared on Gerald Crane's and Edward Eldred's Menagerie and Circus United in the fall of 1834. Ad from Washington D.C. *Globe* of November 1, 1834. Pfening Archives.



Brown in New Orleans. John Robinson is on the roster as the Herculean Horseman. This indicates that he had been with Eldred in the interim. Unfortunately, nothing has been found of Eldred's 1833 season.

In late October, 1834, Eldred combined his circus with Gerard Crane's menagerie for a one-month season as Crane & Eldred's Menagerie and Circus United. Robinson was the stilt-dancer and three-horse bareback rider. This company went into Philadelphia in December, 1834, and emerged in 1835 as one of the units of the Zoological Institute. At this point, excepting the name Benedict & Haddock, we have answered all the questions arising from the Cincinnati volume.

During the winter of 1834-35 Buckley, Weeks & Co.'s Mammoth Circus performed as a winter show in Philadelphia and Robinson was their two and three-horse rider, as well as performing the "Flying Mercury" with a Master Hicks. When Buckley, Weeks went on the road, Robinson went with them. He stayed with the show until it was sold at auction in Somers, New York, in August, 1837. Charles H. Bacon formed a new circus in Baltimore in November, 1837, and hired Robinson, who remained with it and the successor title, Bacon & Derious, until late 1838.

At this point we turn to Olsen's article, which is mostly a column from the Indianapolis *Evening News* of January 6, 1870 in which an article in the *Cincinnati Chronicle* of December 31, 1869, is reproduced. In it the anonymous writer states that "Thirty years ago today on the 31st of December, 1839," occurred the famous rampage of



John Robinson's early career has been the source of one of circus historiography's more lively controversies. Pfening Archives.

the elephant Columbus near New Orleans. The elephant first attacked his brother pachyderm, Hannibal, then his keeper, broke up a cage and lunged at John Robinson and Arthur Crippen ("both of this city") who escaped because they were on horseback.

The article places Robinson on the show, a combination of two Raymond & Waring units, and there he has remained in historiography ever since.

However, there is a major error in the

Cincinnati account. The incident did not happen on December 31, 1839. It happened February 23, 1841. A full description is in the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* of February 24, 1841. John Robinson was on the scene as a visitor, being at the time "director of the circle" (road manager) of the circus troupe attached to Ludlow and Smith's American Theatre.

Where was he, then, in 1839? We don't know. Glenroy avers that Robinson was with Bacon & Derious in May, 1838 and we do not find him again until he was advertised by Ludlow & Smith in St. Louis in September, 1840. He held the position of manager of the circus contingent until April, 1842, when he left to form a partnership, his first circus, with Joseph Foster. The myth of 1824 was eighteen years ahead of the truth.

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# ANIMAL TRAINER LETTERHEADS


Like other circus performers, animal trainers often used colorful stationery. Sometimes the letter paper was an advertisement for the act as the words "famous," "finest," "most exclusive," and that all time favorite "greatest" are commonly found on the sheets. Virtually all trainers featured an illustration of the type of animal they handled, leaving little doubt as to their profession. These examples date from the 1910s to the 1950s, and include some of the highest quality and most popular acts of the period. Some of them are quite elaborate, dispelling to a degree the old saw that the poorer the act the fancier the letterhead. The practice of using customized letterheads continues today.





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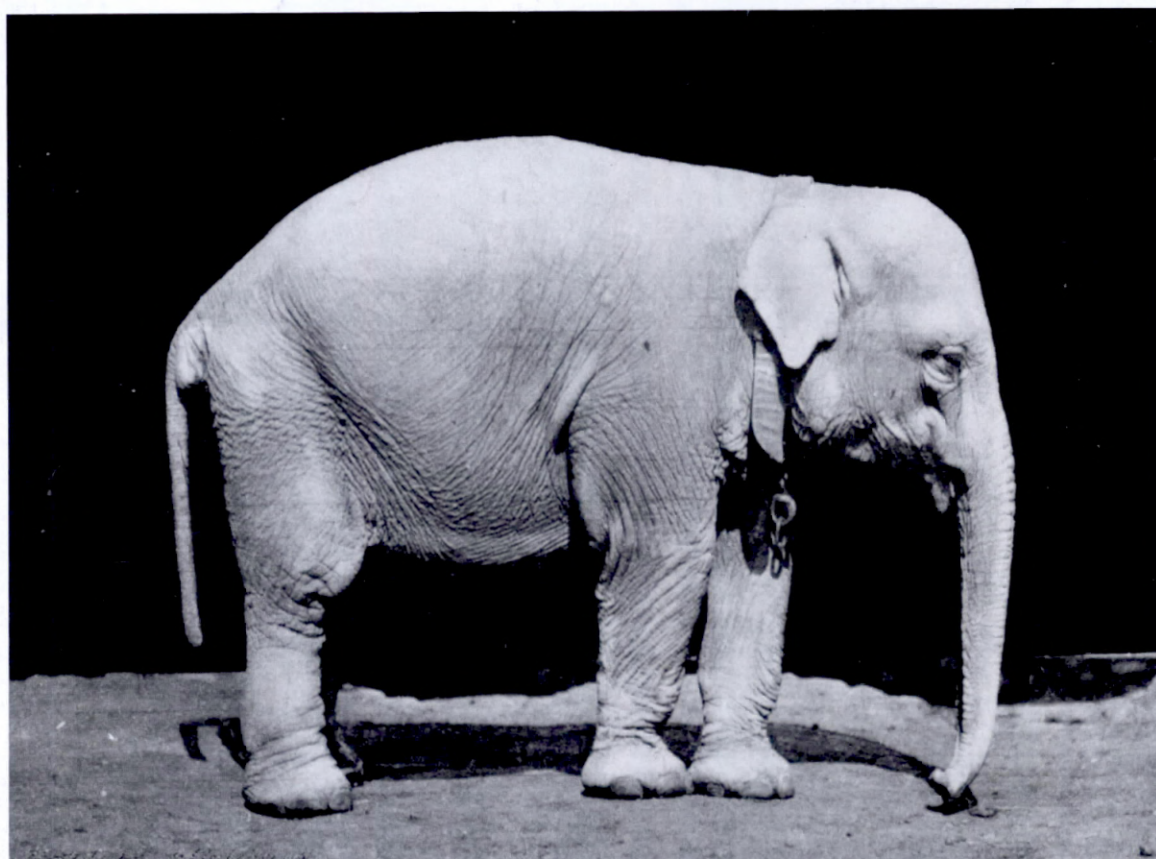
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Just because Adam Forepaugh didn't own a white elephant didn't mean he couldn't take a picture of it. This photo, presumably sold in the Forepaugh menagerie, purported to show Light of Asia, going so far as to assign it an arrival date in America. Original photograph in the Zoological Society of Philadelphia.